

RAISING THE SOCIAL BAR:
EFFECTS OF THE PHYSICAL AND AMBIENT ENVIRONMENT ON SOCIAL
INTERACTION IN BAR ENVIRONMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

A guy walks into a bar. The bartender smiles, greets him by name, and hands him his usual. The place is alive with conversation and friendly faces. Does this sound like an episode of Cheers? What makes this place so chummy, a culture of welcoming regulars while the bar around the corner is unsociable and bereft of life? This is a question I started asking myself as I have recently become a regular at a bar for the first time in my life at a small local tap room.

The Pub Advocacy Group commissioned a study titled “Friends on Tap” in which researchers found that people who frequent the same local bar, “have more close friends on whom they can depend for support, are more satisfied with their lives and feel more embedded in their local communities,” than those who tend to hop around to different bars (Dunbar, 2016, p. 4). What’s more, is that studies also show that social relationships “affect mental health, health behavior, physical health, and mortality risk” (Umberson and Montez, 2010, p. 1).

When I first was drawn to this topic, my concept map (see Appendix B) drew all the way from bars to place attachment. In the exploration of topical interest, I found that social interaction was such an important part to this that I decided to focus my study there. Any bar is going to have a bar fly or two, but the social energy of a place makes it unique. Even as a self-proclaimed introvert, I have made not only numerous acquaintances, but true friends at this tap room that I have become a part of. So, what is it about this place? If it were simply the alcohol, all bars would have this stimulating social atmosphere, but there is more. The bartenders at this bar are friendly, but most bartenders are. Eliminating these two possibilities leads me to believe it is something else. What else is there? The environment that surrounds us.

While there have been numerous studies on various effects of the physical and ambient environment on humans (Bitner, 1992; Brand, 2009; Evensen, 2014; Milliman, 1986;

Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011; Waxman, 2006), few focus on how these aspects affect social interaction (Barnd, 2009; Evensen, 2014; Waxman, 2006), and none discuss the effect in bar environments specifically. The existing research leaves designers with little evidence with which to make informed decisions when designing local bar environments. Jovial sociable bar visitors are returning customers, making a bar more profitable and successful, and the regulars happier and healthier.

Existing Literature

As I began investigating topics for my thesis, I knew I wanted to pull in some aspects of environmental psychology and third place environments (places other than work or home where people gather) because they have always held interest to me. I began by investigating literature that was already out there. One study by Lisa Waxman titled *The Coffee Shop: Social and Physical factors Influencing Place Attachment* caught my attention and reminded me of the local tap room at which I have become a regular. Deciding then that I would focus on bar establishments, I created a literature map starting with bars and ending with place attachment (see Appendix B). Seeing how extensive my map had become, I knew I really needed to narrow the topic. What I kept coming back to was social interaction which was about half-way across my map. Because of my own experience, I believed you couldn't get to place attachment without the social relationships that develop in a third place environment. At that point, I also narrowed down my literature review and began to identify aspects of the physical and ambient environment that I thought may contribute to the phenomenon of social interaction in bars.

Bars have traditionally been designed for profitability, functionality, flow, and general aesthetic value. Design magazine articles and continuing education by associations, including those specific to the food and beverage industry, are most often dedicated to these qualities.

Investigation of how bar design can encourage social interaction is important, as it will contribute to knowledge in the design industry and may be a crucial factor to increase business, get regular customers, and amp up the social vibe. According to Bennett and Bennett (1970), “all social interaction is affected by the physical container in which it occurs” (cited in Bitner, p. 61). A 2018 report titled *Beer Serves America* tells us, “The beer industry contributes \$328.4 billion in economic output,” “generates more than 2.1 million jobs,” and “nearly \$59 billion in state, federal, and local taxes” (John Dunham & Associates, 2019, cover). In addition, I found that a good local bar may contribute to community cohesion and economics as well as human health and well-being (Dunbar, 2016).

Christine Sismondo of Toronto’s York University (2014), puts forth in her book *America Walks into a Bar*, that bars deserve more credit in history than they tend to get; that they are where conversations get started. Throughout history, subjects such as interior design, proxemics, hospitality and management, environment-behavior, environmental psychology, and sociology have all contributed many bits and pieces related to either social interaction or how people are affected by the physical or ambient environment. Little research however has been done to determine how the physical and ambient environment might affect social interaction, and even less can be found on how this topic applies more specifically to bars.

Although little has been studied on this very specific topic, there are a few pieces of literature that have provided me with a solid foundation with which to start. Oldenburg (1989) coined the term “third place” in his book titled *The Great Good Place*. A third place can be generally defined as a public place other than work and home where people gather for the purpose of socializing. This concept of the third place, in addition to studies stemming from Bitner’s (1992) work regarding servicescape environments provides a good jumping off point

from which to begin my own research. Bitner coined term “servicescape,” meaning a physical setting in which a marketplace exchange is performed, delivered, and consumed within a service organization (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2009). Follow-ups to Bitner’s work have also proved helpful. Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2002) expanded Bitner’s framework by recognizing customers as an important part of the servicescape environment, and Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) took it even further suggesting the servicescape environment is composed of physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural environmental conditions. With a review of these works, I dive into my own research in an effort to further the study and knowledge of how the built environment affects social interaction in a specific type of third place and servicescape environment, bars.

Third Place

What is a bar and why are they important? Ray Oldenburg coined the term “third place” in his 1989 book titled *The Great Good Place*. He explains that third places are public places other than work and home and are characterized by the following: 1) A third place is neutral ground, leading to social equality among those who might hold a higher or lower status elsewhere. 2) Conversation is the main activity within a third place environment. 3) Third places are accessible and accommodating. “One may go alone at almost any time of the day or evening with assurance that acquaintances will be there” (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 32). 4) The regulars are what give a third place environment its own unique character. 5) A third place tends to maintain a low profile. Oldenburg includes in his book rich descriptions of the physical environment of third places. He explains that they are typically plain, unimpressive looking, and not elegant. “Plainness, or homeliness, is also the “protective coloration” of many third places” (1989, p. 36). Oldenburg (1989) considers, “Plainness, especially on the inside of third places, also serves to

discourage pretention among those who gather there” (p. 37). 6) A third place maintains a playful mood where there is much talk, but conversations are light. 7) Last, but not least, a third place is a home away from home.

Not every bar is a true third place. As Oldenburg (1989) shares, “Nothing more clearly indicates a third place than that the talk there is good; that it is lively, scintillating, colorful, and engaging” (p. 26). This is not the case at every bar, however. As Hall (2011) points out, “Instead many consumption spaces are purely that; spaces in which individuals consume goods and services in ways that can encourage individualism, segregation, and stifle interaction” (p. 4). While Oldenburg’s book was written years ago, it is no less relevant today than the day it was published. Third places have not ceased to exist, and a good third place, such as a bar, maintains the same spirit that Oldenburg outlines in his book.

Importance of Social Relationships

The Pub Advocacy Group commissioned a study titled “Friends on Tap” in which researchers found that people who frequent the same local bar, “have more close friends on whom they can depend for support, are more satisfied with their lives and feel more embedded in their local communities,” than those who tend to hop around to different bars (Dunbar, 2016, p. 4). It is also explained that even in this day and age of social media and other web-based communications, friendships are still mainly created and maintained by face-to-face interactions (Dunbar, 2016). This fact elevates the importance of third place environments like bars, which help to maintain or even increase social network size and quality for individuals who frequent them, this having “dramatic effects on health, wellbeing, happiness and even survival,” as well as community cohesion (Dunbar, 2016, p. 5). In addition, Rosenbaum (2006) contends that “people imbue a place with sentiment as a result of their social relationships in the place” (p. 61). This

may, in fact, result in return customers. Furthermore, he notes a consumer's "place loyalty" correlates with the perceived social value of the place (2006, p.69).

The Servicescape Environment

Now that the definition of a third place environment and the importance of social interaction is clear, we can see why efforts made toward intentional bar design may be fruitful. Not only are bars third place environments, but they are also what Bitner (1992) coins as servicescapes. Bitner (1992) defines the servicescape as the built environments, "the manmade, physical surroundings" (p. 57), in which a service is both produced and consumed, such as hotels, restaurants, and professional offices. Bitner (1992, p. 58) contends that the servicescape "affects both consumers and employees in service organizations," and that one affects the experience of the other. She provides a conceptual framework which indicates how a variety of objective environmental factors produce cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses by both customers and employees. Most important to the research I put forth in this study is Bitner's idea that, "Those internal responses to the environment influence the behavior of individual customers and employees in the servicescape and affect social interactions between and among customers and employees" (1992, p. 59). At the same time, approach and avoidance behaviors may be affected, such as spending money, attraction and friendliness toward others, and returning to the place of service.

Bitner's servicescape perspective includes three dimensions: ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, and signs, symbols, and artifacts. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) expanded on this framework by indicating "a perceived servicescape comprises physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural environmental dimensions" (p. 473), recognizing that social and natural stimuli components also affect behaviors in consumption settings. Both Bitner (1992)

and Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) recognize that it is the holistic environment that makes up the perceived servicescape.

Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2002) take the frameworks provided, coining the term “social servicescape,” and contend that, “the human element must be considered central to the servicescape environment” (p. 1462). They emphasize the fact that “other customers within the servicescape play an integral role in the successful delivery of the service,” and that they should be considered a part of the environment. “Therefore, as the organization strives to encourage and nurture social interaction the customers present are invariably integrated into the overall service environment and consequently the production of the service experience” (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2002, p. 1462). Tombs and McColl-Kennedy’s concept recognizes that a customer’s service experience is made up of the company of others, the setting, or the atmosphere created within that setting.

These foundational studies allow me to take the research a step further by studying a very specific type of third place and servicescape environment, the bar, and better define what physical and ambient attributes may affect social interaction within such a place. For this study, I have focused on certain variables: overall size and dimension of space, layout and seating options, the size and shape of the actual bar fixture, amenities (such as games, television, and Wi-Fi), lighting, music, acoustics, cosmetic décor, atmosphere, and “regulars.” These attributes were chosen because they represent physical and ambient features of the environment to which the designer and bar owner have some control. The following section provides an overview of what prior research indicates, or is missing, regarding such features as they relate to social interaction and/or behavior.

Overall Size and Dimension of Space

While overall size and dimension of space has been attributed to perceptions regarding space, little can be found regarding how this attribute may affect social interaction. For example, Sadalla and Oxley (1984) determined a rectangular room appears larger from the center point than a square room of the same square footage. While Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) indicate as a result of their studies that customers who patronize a servicescape environment with the goal of fulfilling their consumption need for goods or services may base their approach/avoidance behaviors on an establishment's physical dimensions, they do not indicate whether these physical dimensions affect social interaction specifically, and also do not indicate what these physical dimensions may be. Aside from the obvious fact that the size of a space carries limitations as to what may occur within that space (Canter, 1997), we do not know much as to how the size may affect behavior. The most defined piece of information regarding overall size of a space was presented by Jay L. Brand (2009) who said, "a high (or sloping) ceiling encourages social interaction" (p. 2). This was from a white paper disseminated by Haworth for workspace design, however, and it is unclear as to whether it pertains to all environments. Because ceiling height is important to the perception of overall room size and the ceiling is not a physical element that people have direct contact with, I believe it may indeed encourage social interaction in many other types of environments, including bars.

The existing literature may be helpful in providing some physical characteristics to look out for and how humans perceive such dimensions, such as shape and ceiling height, and how people behave within an environment, such as approach/avoidance behavior, the question remains of how these factors may affect social interaction in bar environments.

Layout and Seating Options

According to Brand (2009), “social interaction and the layout of space reciprocally influence each other” (p. 2). I ask the question again; can this be applied to bar environments? And exactly what kind of layout achieves a high level of social interaction? Waxman (2006) found during her study of place attachment in coffee shops that comfortable seating as well as seating that can easily be moved to accommodate conversations or groups contribute to a customer’s inclination to linger. I am interested to see if the findings from an environment similar to a bar, such as a coffee shop, will translate. If a bar customer is able to socialize with others and has the inclination to linger, he/she is likely to be or become a returning, regular customer.

Brand’s (2009) research is specific to a certain type of environment, the workplace. How wonderful for designers to be able to draw from this research when designing these types of environments. But what can we do for a bar establishment? Waxman’s study of coffee shops is at least relevant to another type of third place environment, and so the question is whether this information holds true in a bar establishment.

Size and Shape of Bar Fixture

In a study about *Patterns of Behavior Over Coffee*, Will (2013) contends, “A bar facilitates engagement between staff and patrons in an area specific to recreational social interaction” (pp. 70-71). My study determines if this is true in a bar environment. If you type the words “bartender therapist” in an internet search, you will find many links pop up. How might the bar facilitate this as well as social interaction among customers? In an interview of Jon Taffer, star of the television reality show *Bar Rescue*, he defined what he calls bar science as “the study of human behavior as it relates to a bar environment” (Lazzaro, 2016). He goes on to

explain certain aspects of the bar environment that enhance a visitor's experience. When asked by interviewer Lazzaro (2016), "Are there certain shapes and ways to arrange a bar that make for the best crowd?" Taffer contends that bar shape is critical. He goes on to share what I assume to be his own anecdotal evidence, "Island bars are ideal because there's a circular pattern and people flow through. When you're sitting at the bar, you're not staring at the wall; you're staring at another person, so they're inherently more interactive and more comfortable" (Lazzaro, 2016, Ways to Arrange a Bar section, para. 1); however, there is no indication as to whether his opinion is backed by empirical evidence.

We find very little empirical evidence regarding the effects of the bar fixture on human behavior. How may a bar be designed to facilitate social interaction among customers and with staff? Taffer provides some ideas that may be worth investigating.

Amenities

Some bars are rich with amenities such as games, televisions, and Wi-Fi. An article titled *Bars Ban Cell Phones to Promote Social Interaction* (An, 2018) in which the author shares, "Old Lightning, a rare spirits bar in Venice [California], collects phones at the door and gives guests a valet ticket to pick up their phones on their way out." The bar's director of marketing shared, "It allows people to connect with each other instead of just living through their phones." An (2018) also references a research study in which it was found that, "83 percent of survey respondents feel that using a phone hurts conversation in a social setting" (para. 4). According to Jeffres, Bracken, Jian & Casey, (2009), while social networking and online communities have become increasingly prevalent over recent years, many participants in this online activity conduct these "interactions" in public spaces. With this said, one can contend that the ability to access an internet network in places such as bars and coffee shops may attract customers. According to

The Creation of Place Design Team (n.d.), “‘Connecting’ a third place venue not only makes sense for the customer and their lifestyle, it gives them a reason to spend more time – and money – at the venue” (Section 4, para. 2). Does this, however, hinder face-to-face interactions that may otherwise be occurring in the physical realm? Fadem (2017) believes, “In a way, wireless internet divorced a sense of a community from our Third Places, as we collectively put our earbuds in and heads down” (para. 10).

Television is another common amenity within bar environments. A research study conducted by Cabras and Mount (2016) indicated sporting events being shown on television was an incentive for visiting the pub. Incentive, perhaps, but does the presence of television encourage or hinder social interaction? Greg Keating, managing partner of the Ale House Columbia, says televisions spark conversations (Pollard, 2013). However, on the opposite note, Bowen (2016) reported for the Chicago Tribune in an article titled *TVs in Chicago Bars and Restaurants Driving Us to Distraction* an experience she had at a certain establishment where the “televisions seem like distracting ornaments hung from the ceiling in a space otherwise built for conversation” (para. 9). She also captions a picture provided with the article under which she notes the bartender shown as calling TVs “conversation killers” (second image caption). Bowen does recognize that sports bars are a different beast entirely. Should we reserve the widescreens for environments such as this?

Other stationary, interactive bar games, such as pool, darts, and shuffleboard may be present in a bar environment as well. According to McEwen (2014), shuffleboard tables are common in certain parts of the country, but in the south they tend to only be in “relatively trendy” bars in urban environments (p. 193). Does this game encourage approach/avoidance behaviors from a cultural standpoint? McEwen (2014) also stated in his research that at one

location of observation, the owner got rid of their pool tables because they were causing altercations among customers. This is clearly not the kind of social interaction a bar owner would strive for in their establishment.

While we are able to find opinions regarding certain types of amenities often available in a bar establishment, that's all they are... opinions. Can we back up any of these claims with research? Does the availability of Wi-Fi, television, and games in a bar establishment encourage or discourage social interaction among customers?

Lighting

Canter (1997) suggests that in place evaluation, "It is typically the case that heating, lighting, and acoustic aspects of an environment highly correlate with each other" (p. 140). This may be the case from a holistic standpoint, however does it stand true when determining how these elements affect behavior? Evensen (2014) conducted a study on *The Effects of Lighting on Social Interaction*, but the study was conducted in a mocked living room environment where one would assume people are engaging with friends or family rather than with strangers. Taffer contends the lower the light level, the more intimacy it brings to conversations. "...people get closer together to talk" (Lazzaro, 2016, Ways to Arrange a Bar section, para. 1). But, once again, he provides this suggestion with no empirical evidence. According to Brand's (2009) research on social interaction in the workplace, daylight from windows increases social desirability, as "moods and emotional tone can be improved by natural light" (p. 2). Does this translate to bar environments? While Bitner (1992) explains that glare from lighting may hinder a person's ability to see and hence cause physical discomfort, it is unclear as to whether this discomfort relates to one's desire to socially interact with others.

Once again, we find holes in existing literature. Evensen's (2014) study was conducted to determine how people may stay socially engaged with one another in homes during the short, dark days in the Nordic countries. That is a far cry from much of the United States, and living rooms are not bars. Likewise, Brand's (2009) research focuses on a different type of place altogether. It is worth investigating if his findings hold true in bar establishments.

Music

Bitner (1992) lists music under the servicescape environmental dimension ambient conditions. She credits Millman's (1982, 1986) findings that the tempo of music playing in the background at supermarkets and restaurants affects length of stay and sales. Bitner (1992) also summarizes that the effects of music are more noticeable when it is extreme (e.g. loud), when a person spends considerable time in the establishment, and when it conflicts with expectation.

Millman's (1982, 1986) findings could make for an interesting experiment. Does the tempo of music playing affect length of stay and sales in a bar establishment? Whether or not this is the case, my question remains unanswered in the available literature: Does music affect social interaction?

Noise/Acoustics

Noise is also identified by Bitner (1992) and Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) as an ambient condition. We know that noise can be caused by many factors aside from music; equipment, people, television, HVAC, etc. According to Bitner (1992), undesirable noise in an environment may cause physical discomfort and avoidance behavior. Montello (2007) lists noise as a factor which influences the sociality psychological mechanism. In a study of how social and physical factors influence place attachment in coffee shops, Waxman (2006) found from survey results that appealing acoustics rated sixth in design and ambient characteristics of the ideal shop

and contributes to length of time spent in the establishment. Does this translate to bars, and if so, how does it relate to social interaction? One may contend that some kinds of noise may actually be desirable in certain types of environments. According to Rosenbaum and Massisah (2011), “A fascinating servicescape is an engaging servicescape where people can escape to hear the noise and banter of others and can join others when they opt to do so” (p. 480). Regardless, noise is an ambient condition that may be somewhat controlled by the built environment.

Bitner’s (1992) suggestion that undesirable noise may cause discomfort and therefore avoidance behavior may indicate that people in a bar establishment are less likely to socially interact with others when the establishment is noisy. Waxman’s (2006) survey results showing that good acoustics rated sixth in a list of eleven design and ambient characteristics of an ideal coffee shop is interesting. It will be interesting to determine if this comes up in my own research about bar establishments, but more importantly, does this affect social interaction?

Cosmetic Décor

Style of décor is listed in Bitner’s (1992) environmental dimension Signs, Symbols, and Artifacts. It is a part of the perceived servicescape, “influencing people’s beliefs about a place and their beliefs about the people and products found in that place” (Bitner, p. 62). This is an environmental condition that is easily controlled by a bar owner. Décor may include many factors including color, signage, textures, quality of materials, style of furnishings, wall décor, and so on. For example, many studies have been conducted to indicate people’s emotional and physiological reactions to color (Kaya & Epps, 2004; Mehrabian and Russel, 1974; Nijdam, 2009). According to Hiddleston (2017), in restaurant design:

Colors are the first emotional trigger people will come in contact with as soon as they walk into the room, and you want to capture their attention and dazzle their

senses with the use of strong, yet warm hues that portray intimacy, trust, peace and excitement. (Colors Set the Stage section, para. 1)

It will be interesting to see if this statement agrees with my findings from bar environments.

Interestingly, Waxman's (2006) findings about place attachment in coffee shops placed décor, color, and visual appeal as the last three of eleven items identified by subjects in the list of design and ambient characteristics making the ideal coffee shop.

I hope to identify how these findings hold true in a bar establishment? Is color important, and does it affect social interaction? This may be difficult to determine. It may be more likely that I will identify how customers perceive the overall décor of a bar. Is it important to them and their choice in which bar to frequent? How does it affect social interaction?

Regulars

Oldenburg (1989) emphasizes:

What attracts the regular visitor to a third place is supplied not by management but by fellow customers. The third place is just so much space unless the right people are there to make it come alive, and they are the regulars. It is the regulars who give the place its character and who assure that on any given visit some of the gang will be there. (pp.33-34)

Most importantly, he (Oldenburg, 1989) notes, "It is the regulars whose mood and manner provide the infectious and contagious style of interaction and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial" (p. 34).

I couldn't agree more but look for answers as to what gets them there in the first place, keeps them returning, and encourages this "contagious style of interaction?" I seek to determine

whether or not the bars in my own study have robust groups of regulars. Do these regulars interact with one another? Is it infectious? How does this affect the perception of the place?

Summary

While there is much information available to designers about the function, flow, and general ambience of a bar establishment, there are holes in the literature regarding how the physical and ambient environment of a bar affects social interaction. There is much literature contributed by researchers of various disciplines pertaining to the individual parts of my research question of how the physical and ambient environment affects social interaction in bars, for example there is much to do with the effects of the physical and ambient environment on human behavior, such as emotion and approach/avoidance behavior; and there is some to do with the effects of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction, such as in homes and workplaces. The gaps in the literature relate to the lack of information linking the findings to the uniqueness of bar establishments. For example, can the findings from Evensen's (2014) study on the effects of lighting on social interaction in a living room translate? I seek to synthesize the multiple bits of information gleaned from the literature review with my own research to determine how they may translate to my topic: effects of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction in bar environments.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to discover how the physical and ambient environment may contribute to increased social interaction among patrons in bars. In an effort to determine what makes a bar particularly social, or not, I conducted research in four different establishments. I observed overall size and dimension, layout and seating options, size and shape of bar fixture, amenities (such as television, games, and Wi-Fi), lighting, music, other

noise and acoustic properties, cosmetic décor, and the presence of regulars. As a designer, I propose we begin to determine how these specific physical and ambient attributes contribute to the social interaction phenomenon in bars, a very special variety of third place and servicescape environment.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The central question in my research is: How does the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bars? More specifically, how do the overall size and dimension, layout and seating options, size and shape of the bar fixture, amenities (such as television, games, and Wi-Fi), lighting, music, other noise and acoustic properties, and cosmetic décor affect social interaction among bar patrons?

Hypothesis

Characteristics of the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bar establishments. To be more specific, I believe my research will find the following physical and ambient characteristics important to the level of social interaction in bars: 1) overall size and dimension, 2) layout and seating options, 3) size and shape of bar fixture, 4) music, 5) acoustics, and 6) the presence of regulars. I anticipate that a smaller establishment along with a layout that allows visual access and proximity to others while seated will make social interaction between customers feel more natural. If music is too loud and/or acoustics make it difficult to hear others, I believe customers may not make the effort to hold conversations. Lastly, if there is an obvious presence of regulars or others who appear comfortable within the establishment and are talking with one another, people may feel more relaxed themselves and willing to join in conversation with other customers because they see that it is the culture there, and it wouldn't be obtrusive or weird. As Oldenburg (1989) noted, it is "infectious and contagious" (p. 34).

CHAPTER 2

Mixed-Methods Research Design

The social nature of this topic lends itself to a qualitative method of research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). Although my research was heavily qualitative, I also conducted surveys to obtain information and quantitative data from tap room patrons regarding their observations and interactions with the physical and ambient environment and other customers. According to Maxwell (2013), using a mixed-methods strategy “reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the biases of a specific method, and allows you to gain a more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating” (p. 102).

As indicated in the Chapter 1 literature review, I began by searching for and reading well over 50 research studies, articles and books to determine what has already been discovered and said about social interaction, its importance, and how it relates to the physical and ambient environment. After discovering there is more to be uncovered about the effects of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction in bars, such as how spatial dimensions, seating layout, and background noise may encourage or discourage these interactions, I set about to conduct observations, interviews and surveys using a convenience sampling method at four local tap rooms in an area of the United States where the microbrew and tap room revolution has really taken hold, the Pacific Northwest.

Data Collection

Observations

I selected four tap rooms as sites for my study and observed each (except Site D) three times. Site A, to which I will refer to as, “The Small Bar,” was an obvious choice, as it was the source of my inspiration. This tap room has a second location (Site B), to which I will refer to as “The Long Bar,” and so I thought it would be interesting to see how they compare. At this point, I saw the benefit of comparing apples to apples, and so I chose Site C, to which I will refer to as “The Sofa Bar,” because of its near geographic location and similarities to Sites A and B in the facts that it serves mainly beer on tap (wine as an option for those who do not like or want beer), and they do not serve food. A fourth site (Site D), to which I will refer to as “The Green Bar,” was recommended to me due to its similar nature to The Small Bar, so I collected data there as well, observing twice.

I began by developing an observation procedure protocol (see Appendix C) to prepare what might be needed prior to immersing myself in any observations. According to Silverman (2017), “Observation has often been the chosen method to understand another culture or subculture” (p. 193). The people of a tap room certainly can make up a culture. The observation protocol included a space to sketch the basic layout of the space onto which I could document the movement and social interactions of each bar visitor. Duerk (1993) calls this “behavior mapping” (p.96). In addition, I set up a form to help document specific physical and ambient characteristics of each space. These included ease of access to the site, overall space dimensions, seat comfort, amenities (including television, Wi-Fi, bar games, programmed entertainment, and a place to document for others), lighting characteristics, including both natural and artificial light, music, colors, temperature, and a place for any other unplanned observational notes.

Interviews

I conducted two interviews at each site, except for Site D at which I conducted one. I interviewed those who I was able to naturally connect with rather than approaching people who I had not spoken with at all and catching them off-guard. I found that this method provided interviews with people who were willing to share their time and thoughts. It was easy to find people to interview at Site A, as I know so many people there. I interviewed one male (45) and one female (40). They are both regulars at this tap room. At Site B, I conducted interviews with one regular (mid-20s) and one non-regular (40s), both males. At Site C, I was able to connect with one female (early 20s) and one male (mid-40s), both non-regulars. And at Site D, I was able to conduct one interview with one male (mid-late 40s).

Interviews helped to find out whether customers believe these tap rooms are social and inviting and what encourages and discourages social interaction within these environments. After developing an appropriate consent form (see Appendix D), I created a protocol to help me navigate the interviews and stay on track (see Appendix E).

The interview questions were developed to first determine whether the interviewees are regulars or newcomers using simple close-ended questions. If they identified themselves as regulars, follow-up questions determine their usual routine, such as when and how often they visit the tap room. Open-ended questions were developed to determine why they visit this bar; for what purpose (socializing, work, etc.), and what makes this a good bar for that purpose? Additional questions ask about their social habits in the bar, whether they come alone or with others, whether they socialize with others, meet new people, etc. Another set of questions are set up to indicate what they like and dislike about the tap room, from both a physical and social standpoint.

Surveys

In addition to observations and interviews, I developed a social survey in order to reach out to more tap room customers. Silverman (2017) defines a social survey as “A quantitative method involving the study of large numbers of people, often through the use of questionnaires” (p. 546). Using a convenience sampling method, I dispersed 40 surveys total (20 at The Small Bar, 10 at The Long Bar, 11 at The Sofa Bar, and 3 at The Green Bar), all of which were completed and returned. As was noted earlier, my research at The Green Bar was one visit only, which provided an excellent observation opportunity; however, because I was not able to collect more surveys at this location, I have not included the responses in the Findings section of this research paper. At each of the tap rooms, I asked anyone I was comfortable approaching. The surveys were first marked with the site, day of the week and time. I developed the questions to include gathered information about whether customers considered that tap room to be a social atmosphere, whether or not they socialized with others during their visit and with whom, where they sat, observations of ambient conditions and amenities, such as music, television, games, and W-Fi access (see Appendix F). It then asked what aspects of that tap room make it a good place to socialize and what aspects make it a poor place to socialize.

Data Recording

Observations

During the first observation of each tap room, I spent most of my time sketching the overall space and layout of fixtures and furniture, as well as documenting all other physical and ambient conditions. The physical and ambient conditions were easily identified and documented. I was able to determine the approximate dimensions and square footage of each tap room. I then drew up the initial rough sketches in AutoCAD for better clarity moving forward.

These drawings were then used to conduct behavior mapping during each observation. I numbered each tap room customer labeling whether they were male or female and at what time they arrived and/or left. I identified on the space plan drawing where they sat and showed if and how they moved throughout the space. I also drew arching lines between their location and the location of those with whom they socially interacted, using a different line type or color to indicate whether this interaction was perceived to be with someone known to them or with a stranger (Appendix G). While it was difficult to know for sure, I was sometimes able to perceive whether the customers were regulars, simply by the way they engaged with the beer-tenders and/or others in the tap room. In addition, I made general notes along the way of special or unique social interactions and behaviors that drew my attention.

I conducted three observations each at Sites A, B, and C, and two at Site D. I was sure to visit on different days of the week and times to see how the customers and social interactions may differ:

- The Small Bar (Site A)
 - Sunday 5:10 – 6:30 PM
 - Sunday 3:40 – 5:30 PM
 - Thursday 5:00 – 5:45 PM
- The Long Bar (Site B)
 - Thursday 5:40 – 7:30 PM
 - Tuesday 6:25 – 8:10 PM
 - Sunday 4:55 – 6:15 PM
- The Sofa Bar (Site C)
 - Thursday 6:40 – 7:30 PM
 - Wednesday 4:15 – 5:00 PM
 - Friday 5:55 – 6:50 PM
- The Green Bar (Site D)
 - Saturday 8:40 – 9:25 PM
 - Wednesday 2:50 – 3:15 PM

These were participant observations that lasted anywhere from 20 to 110 minutes.

Interviews

Interviewees signed a consent form providing them with all required information about my research and the interview process. With permission, the interviews were recorded using a simple phone application called Voice Recorder. It was able to pick up on the interview conversation even with background music and socialization occurring within the tap room, making it easy to transcribe later. All interviews were conducted at the tap rooms of topic. I transcribed the interviews word-for-word the following day into a format like a play script and included notes of vocal iterations such as laughter. I found this recording and transcription method straight forward and useful.

As many potential interviewees are on site with each visit to the tap rooms, I was able to approach them in person and interview on the spot rather than scheduling a day, time, and place to meet. I conducted two interviews each at Sites A, B, and C, and one interview at Site D.

Surveys

I distributed and collected surveys at Sites A, B, C, and D using a convenience sampling method. All surveys collected were completed during customer visits to the tap room and in paper format. Customers were able to complete the surveys fairly quickly, depending on social distractions and amount of thought put into some of their answers. All seemed more than happy to provide their opinions. Because of the low number of surveys collected from Site D (three), I did not consider them for the individual site but did consider them when looking at results of all tap rooms combined when it made sense to group information in this way.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, recording, and review, detailed coding was used in order to organize all data, which has proved helpful in analyzing my research. I used a color-coding system to highlight passages in my notes relating to specific and defined areas of interest related to the topic of the effect of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction in bars.

The data collected afforded the following open codes: overall size and dimension of space; layout and seating options; size and shape of bar fixture; amenities; lighting; music; noise/acoustics; cosmetic décor and regulars. This systematically follows a grounded theory in which an initial attempt to develop categories illuminates data, which soon become saturated by many cases to demonstrate relevance, and then are developed into more general analytic frameworks (Silverman, 2017).

Validity

Triangulation is important to the validity of my research, using multiple methods, such as observations, interviews, and surveys, to collect information. I observed and participated on days of the week and times of day. In order to help avoid personal bias, I interviewed using open-ended questions allowing them to speak freely. Open-ended questions, “refer to those questions for which the response patterns or answer categories are provided by the respondent, not the interviewer” (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004, para. 1). Conducting research at more than one site also helped to diminish validity threats and provided a more in-depth analysis of what is really happening and leading to social interaction. Using multiple research techniques allowed me to keep an eye out for similarities and differences and helped to illuminate common threads and expose discrepant evidence.

CHAPTER 3

Findings

Analysis of the data has enabled me to identify some elements of the physical and ambient environment that may contribute to social interaction in bars. While many physical and/or ambient factors were identified at least once, certain elements came to the forefront through repetition, which led to the codes already identified, and the ability to tie some of the existing research to bar environments. Below you will read my findings of the physical and ambient environment's effect on social interaction in bars.

Overall Size and Dimension of Space

The tap rooms used in this study were of varying sizes. Not including restrooms and storage areas, Site A (the “Small Bar”) was the smallest at 864 square feet (see Figures 1 & 2). The shape and location of the keg cooler gives this little tap room the appearance of being even smaller than it is. Walking in and around the cooler gives it that secret-place feel even more.



Figure 1. The “Small Bar” (Site A) Photo. This figure illustrates the view upon entry once past the cooler.

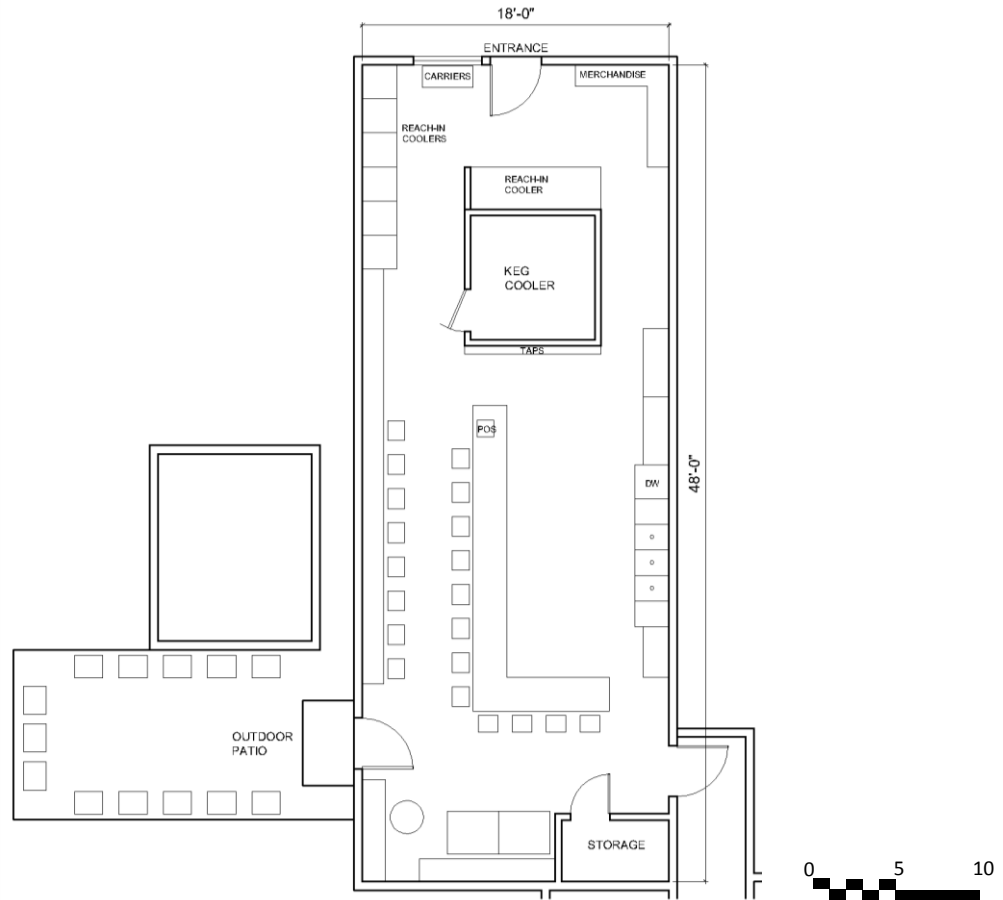


Figure 2. “The Small Bar” (Site A) Space Plan (864 sq. ft.). This figure illustrates the basic size and layout.

Site B (the “Long Bar”) is 968 square feet (see Figures 3 & 4). The straight visual shot from the front all the way to the back door makes the space seem even longer.



Figure 3. The “Long Bar” (Site B) Photo. This figure illustrates the view upon entry.

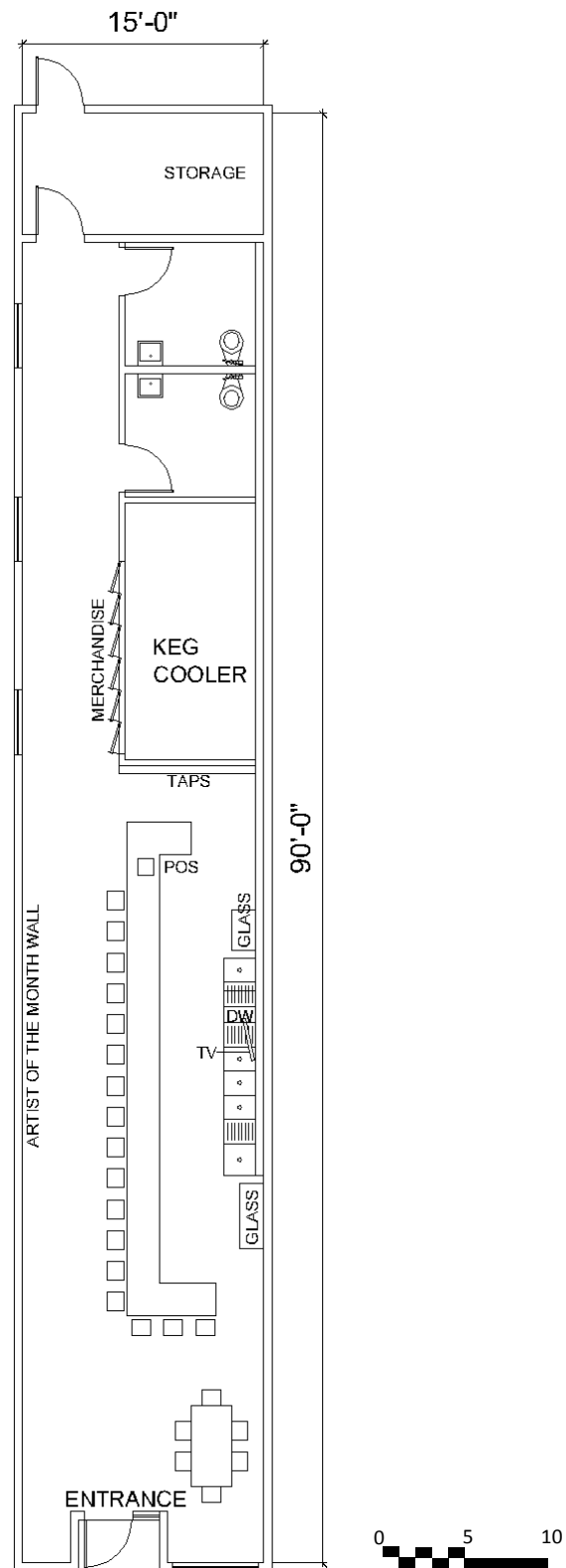


Figure 4. The “Long Bar” (Site B) Space Plan (968 sq. ft.). This figure illustrates the basic size and layout.

Site C (the “Sofa Bar”) is 1426 square feet (see Figures 5 & 6). It is squarer in shape than the others, and is the only one outfitted with a couple sofas.



Figure 5. The “Sofa Bar” (Site C) Photo. This figure illustrates the view from POS end of bar.

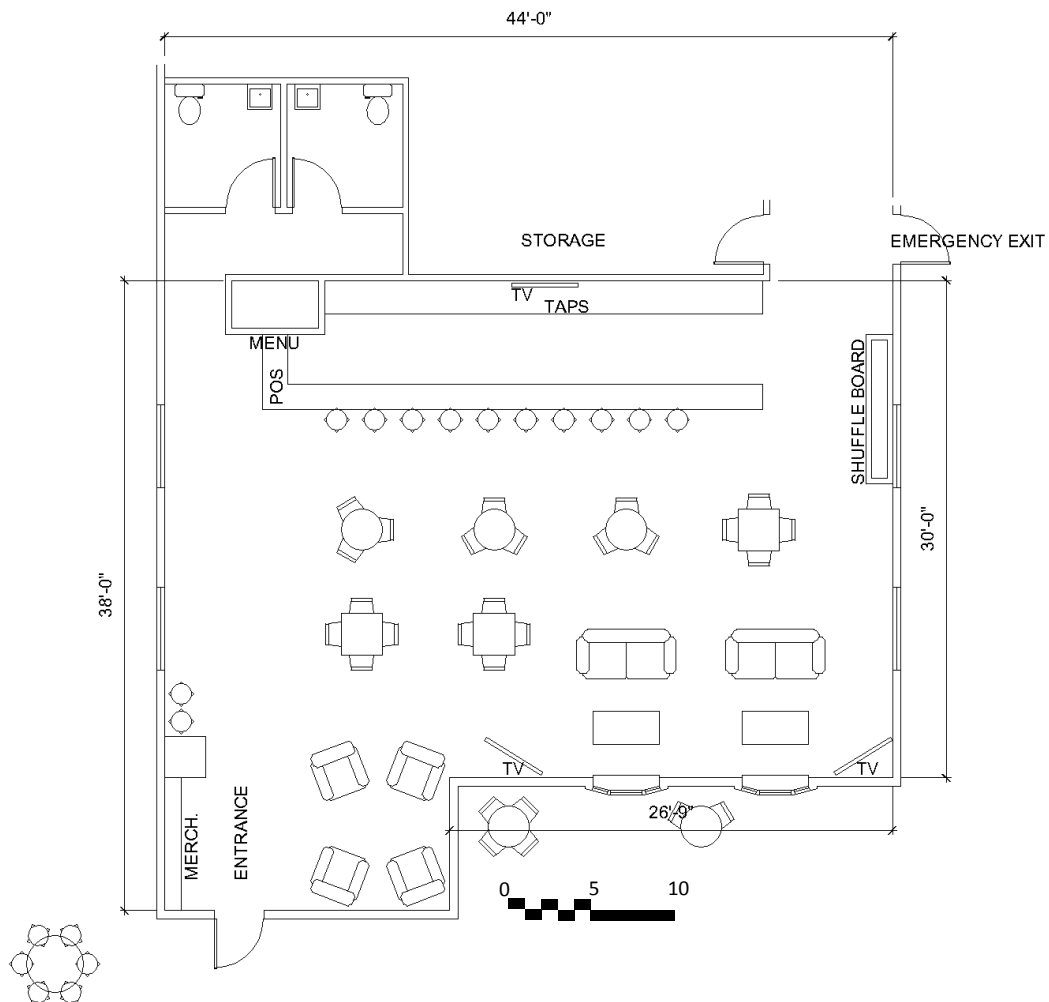


Figure 6. The “Sofa Bar” (Site C) Space Plan (1426 sq. ft.). This figure illustrates the basic size and layout.

Site D (the “Green Bar”) is 1263 square feet (see Figures 7 & 8). It is a satisfying rectangular shape with bright lighting and green walls.



Figure 7. “The Green Bar” (Site D) Photo. This figure illustrates the view from the back looking toward the bar.

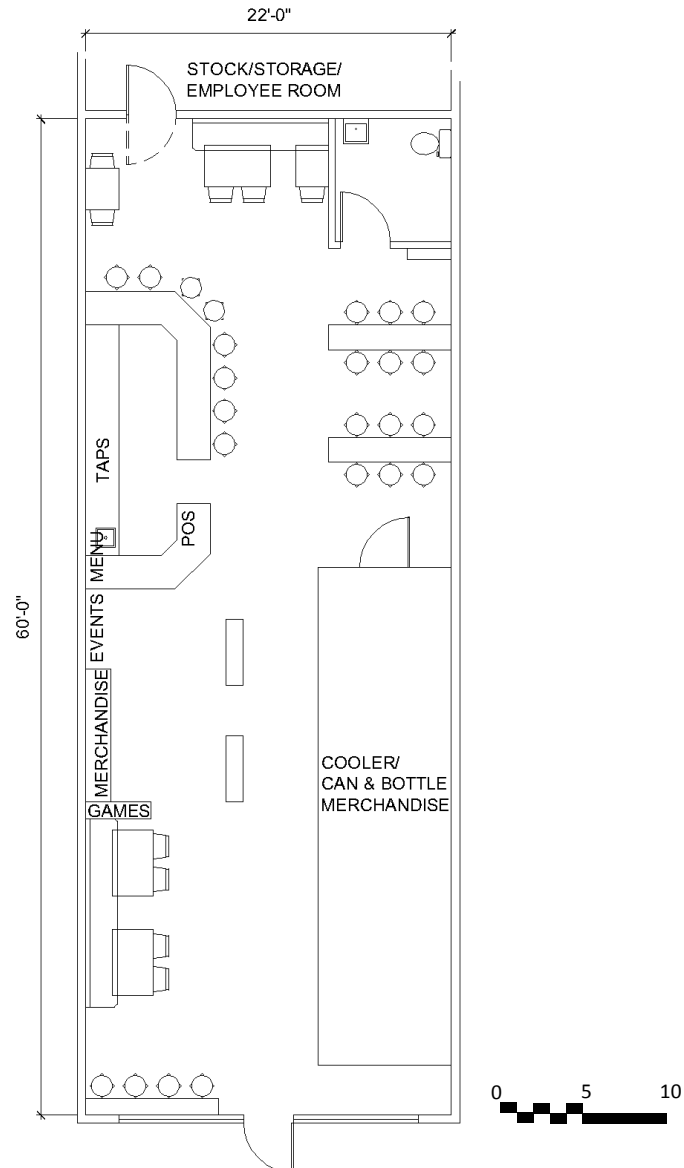


Figure 8. The “Green Bar” (Site D) Space Plan (1263 sq. ft.). This figure illustrates the basic size and layout.

In addition to observations of overall size and shape, the surveys provided some additional insights. The Sofa Bar (Site C) received the highest percentage of respondents (64%) who believed the overall size of the place make it a good environment for social interaction (see Figure 9). This was the largest of the four tap rooms observed at approximately 1426 square feet (not including restrooms, corridors, or storage). The Small Bar (Site A) was next in line at 55% and 864 square feet (not including restrooms, corridors, or outdoor area). This is interesting in

that the two with the highest number of positive responses to overall size were the largest and the smallest.

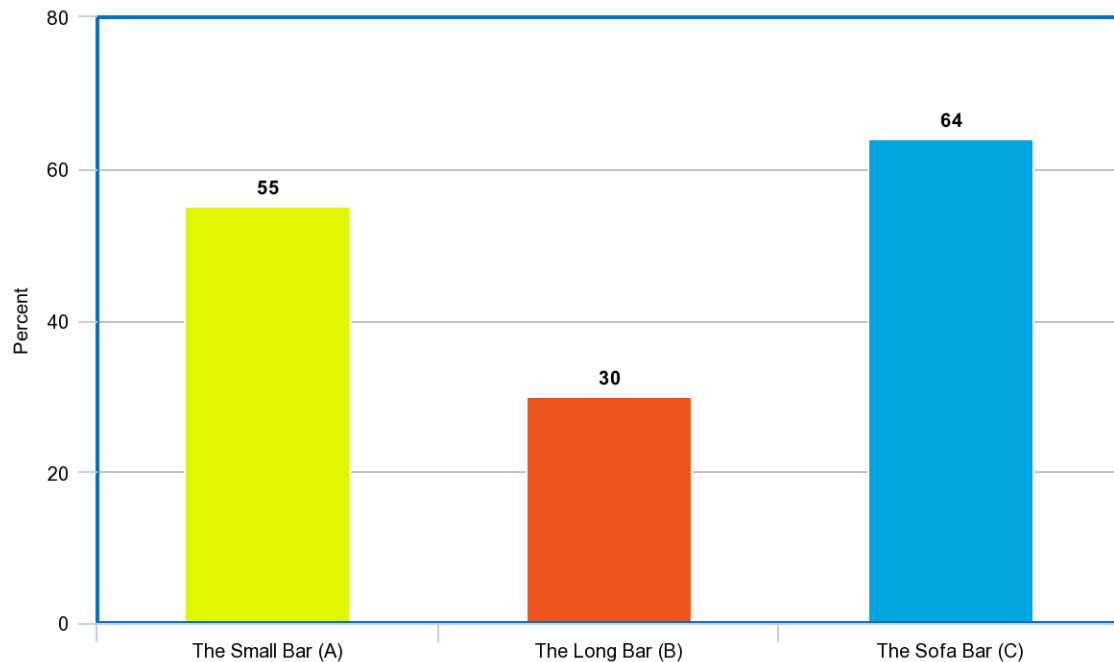


Figure 9. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the overall size and dimensions of the tap rooms make it a good environment for social interaction.

Observations showed that at the Small Bar (Site A), the small size allowed for multiple people to be a part of the same conversation due to proximity. One of the interviewees from Site A also mentioned that the small size of the place makes it a good place to socialize. Another said that they like that the tap room is small enough that “you don’t get lost in the shuffle.” The Sofa Bar (Site C), in addition to occupying more square footage overall, is closer to a square in shape having a more open feel, while all the others, including the Small Bar, are longer and narrower. Observations of the Sofa Bar indicated that while customer-to-customer interactions occur at the bar, people seated elsewhere (at tables or on sofas or lounge chairs) only conversed with those they arrived with or purposely met there. The lack of table and chair options within Site A

forces almost everyone to sit at the bar (if inside) perhaps leading to more customer-to-customer interactions.

Brand's (2009) note that high or sloping ceilings encourage social interaction may have proved true in the tap rooms I chose to study. The Sofa Bar (Site C) has the lowest ceiling of all four tap rooms, and I did observe the least amount of stranger-to-stranger interactions in this tap room.

Layout and Seating Options

The term layout for purposes of this document encompasses where all the elements within the tap rooms are placed and how they are oriented, focusing mainly on the customer seating options and arrangement. Proximity, visual access, and comfort could all be factors.

The Small Bar (Site A) (see Figures 1 & 2) is so small in overall size that it mainly consists of the bar. There is another bar counter attached to and facing a side wall, and a small area of booth/bench seating in the back corner with a couple moveable tables. The interviewees shared that they like to sit at the bar or "wherever's available." "You just want to congregate." One said he likes sitting out on the patio the best "because everyone faces each other," and he believes this makes this tap room a good social space. Another said she thinks the stools are uncomfortable. She also noted that it would be nice if there was available one large table that could seat 8-10 people would improve social interaction at this location. There is simply no room here. Observations showed that guests tend to sit at the main bar if there is a seat available for them. As one might assume, a seat is typically left between each party of guest(s), but at this tap room people are not shy about snuggling into a lone seat between two strangers in order to sit at the main bar rather than using the other seating options. Many people will go directly to the outside seating area to sit even if they do not smoke and particularly if the weather is nice. My

observations indicate that the way the chairs outside are arranged in a U-shape allows everyone to face each other (as the interviewee said) allowing everyone to be in conversation together.

This is a very social atmosphere, as it opens the door for anyone to participate in the chatter and not feel as if they are encroaching on someone's privacy. 40 percent of survey respondents from the Small Bar (Site A) indicated that they thought the arrangements of elements within the space (space plan) make this tap room a good place for social interaction (see Figure 10).

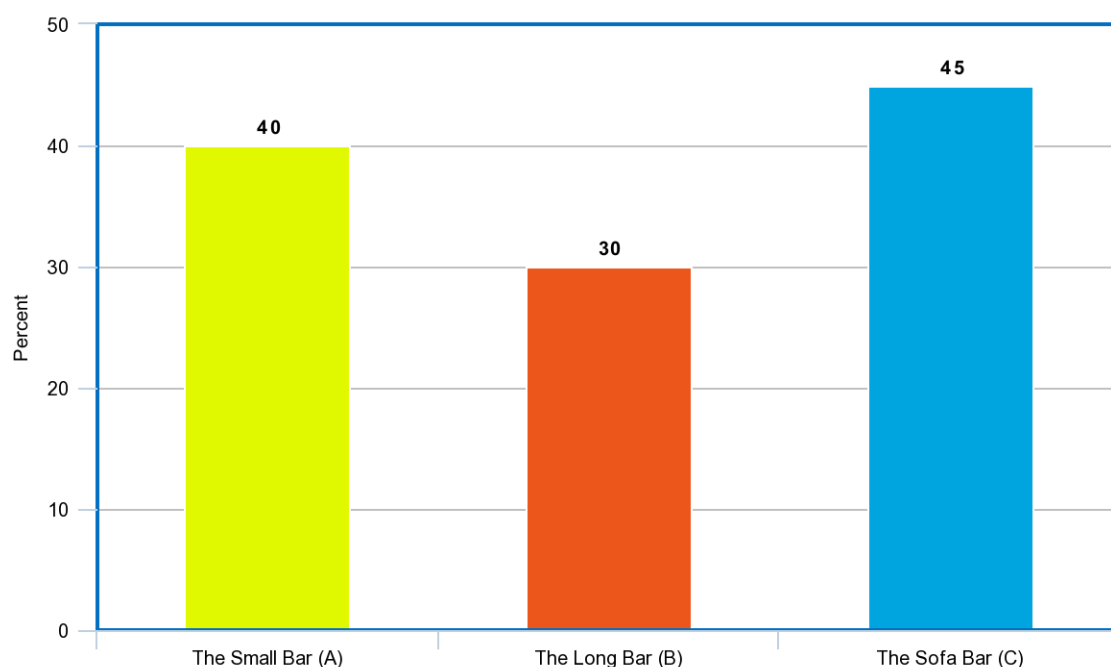


Figure 10. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the arrangement of elements within the tap rooms make it a good environment for social interaction.

The Long Bar (Site B) (see Figures 3 & 4) is extremely long and narrow. Like the Small Bar (Site A), it consists of mainly just the bar. With no outdoor seating option available here, this puts just about everybody at the bar. One interviewee suggested that an outdoor seating area would improve this tap room. There is also one table available that seats six. A single or pair of customers is not going to come into the place and take up a table that seats six. While I did not observe this, I wonder if strangers ever share the table when it gets busy, like a communal table

at a restaurant. Also, worth noting, this table is positioned in such a place that does not allow for conversation with people seated at the bar.

The Sofa Bar (Site C), being unique in overall size and shape compared to the other tap rooms, provides more seating options for customers. As shown (see Figures 5 & 6), in addition to the bar which runs along the back wall, there are several small tables which seat three to four, two small sofas, window benches, and four cushy lounge chairs. One interviewee mentioned that she liked the sofas and how the space plan flows. Of note, she also indicated that she does not feel comfortable socializing with other bar visitors here because “everybody seems secluded.” Placing a more positive spin on this, the other interviewee indicated that he liked that, “there seems to be areas where you could have a little privacy.” As was already mentioned, observations here did indicate that customers here only appear to socially interact with other bar visitors when seated at the bar. The rest of the seating arrangement seems to isolate people, making the place as a whole feel less communal. In our society it is typically viewed as rude to intervene on someone’s conversation when they are seated at a different table than you. There is an invisible boundary that makes people perceive others as “secluded” as was suggested by the interviewee. At the bar, those boundaries do not exist. Placing yourself at the bar is almost like an open invitation to be approached or addressed. While 45 percent at Site C felt the arrangement of elements within the space make it a good place (see Figure 10) for social interaction, 27 percent felt that the arrangement of elements within this tap room make it a poor environment for social interaction (see Figure 11).

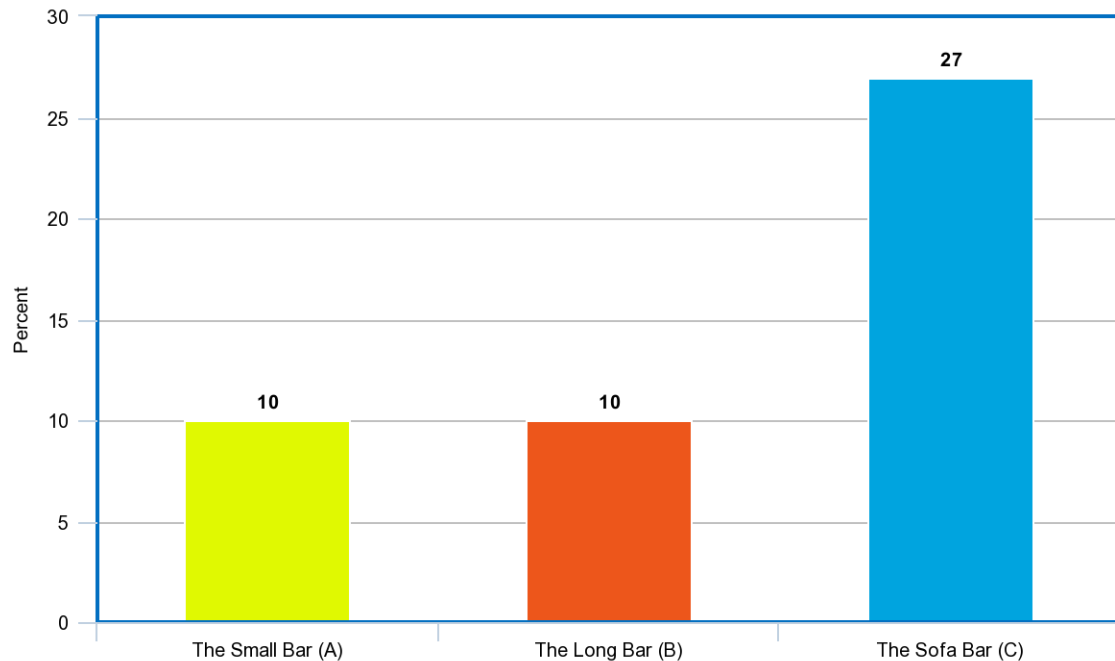


Figure 11. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the arrangement of elements within the tap rooms make it a poor environment for social interaction.

The Green Bar (Site D) (see Figures 7 & 8) is uniquely arranged. As you enter, the bar is all the way at the back. There are several seating options here as well; however they seem to be arranged in such a way that allows for some social interaction between customers. It feels like there is a front area and a back area for seating. Up front there is a counter with seating at the window. There is also a long bench seat with two tables and chairs across. While I did not observe this, I can image customers at these two tables can easily and comfortably interact with one another. The observation indicated though that this is a quieter area. It seems that if you want to simply enjoy the company of the person(s) you're with, you would perhaps want to sit in this front area. Near the middle of the space are two long narrow high tables with no seating. I imagine these are for people to simply set their drinks on while they stand and enjoy conversation with others. In the back area is the small bar and POS. This seemed to be where all the action was at. Very near the bar (within conversation distance) are a high two-seater table, a

long wall bench seat with one two-top and one four-top table and chairs on the other side, and two high-top six-seaters arranged so nobody's back is to the bar. The interviewee said he thinks the way the seating areas seem to face each other makes this a good social space. The observation showed that stranger-to-stranger social interactions did indeed occur among all who were seated in this back area. The beer-tendress indicated that the place was planned for social interaction, but I did not learn any more than that.

Size and Shape of Bar Fixture

Combining results of the surveys from all four tap rooms indicates that the majority (82.5%) of respondents believe that the size and/or shape of the bar fixture affects social interaction either positively or negatively.

At the Small Bar (Site A) (see Figures 1 & 2), there is an L-shaped bar which seats about 12 people, four of which are on the short stem of the "L" for a 1:3 ratio. This provides visual access to many others seated at the bar. Because the overall square footage of this tap room is very small (864 sq. ft.), the bar takes up most of the space. 70 percent of survey respondents from the Small Bar feel the size and/or shape of the bar makes this tap room a good environment for social interaction (see Figure 12). Observations show that most customers at this tap room prefer sitting at this main bar (or outside), rather than at a table or the side wall counter. One interviewee said the fact that the bar is short, not too long, makes this tap room a good social space. He compared it to the Long Bar (Site B) where he says the bar is so long you can't have conversations with those at the other end.

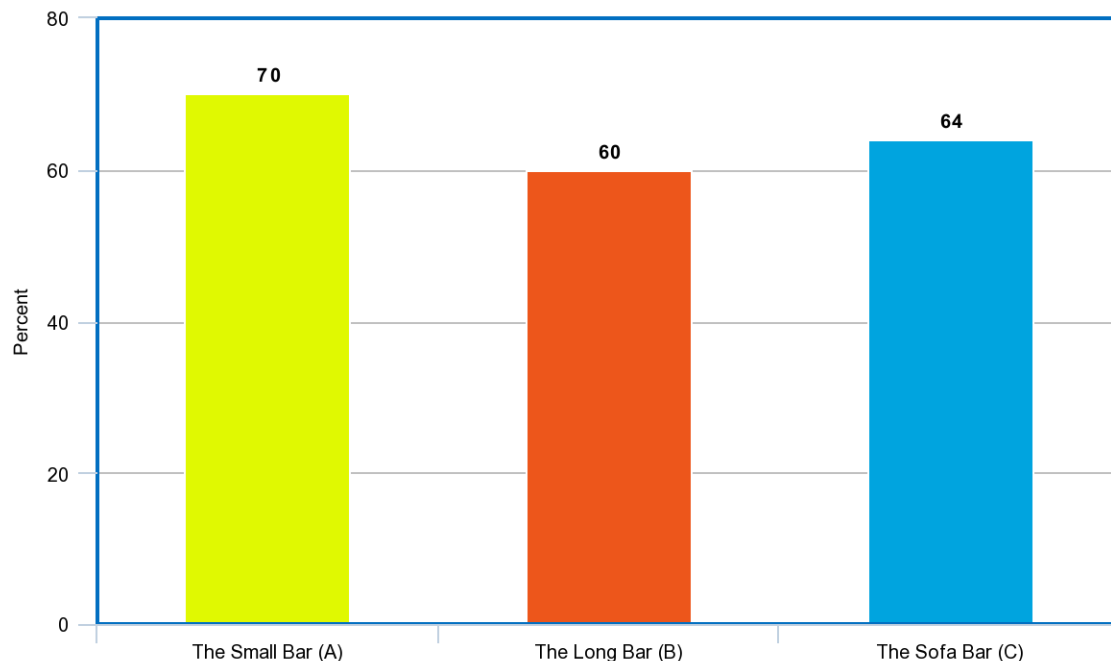


Figure 12. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the size and/or shape of the bar in the tap room make it a good environment for social interaction.

The bar fixture at the Long Bar (Site B) (see Figures 3 & 4) is also L-shaped. It is over 30 feet in length seating approximately 17 people, three of which are on the short stem of the “L” for an almost 1:6 ratio. Observations show that the Small Bar (Site A) interviewee was correct in that it would be very difficult to have a conversation while seated at one end of the bar with someone seated at the other end. 30 percent of the survey respondents from this tap room identified the size and/or shape of this bar make this a poor environment for social interaction. Like the Small Bar (Site A), the bar fixture takes up most of the free area of the space which is very long and narrow.

At the Sofa Bar (Site C) (see Figures 5 & 6), the bar is a straight shape facing the back wall. It seats about ten people. Observations show that this makes it possible to hear customers from one end to the other. Customers have seating choices at this tap room, and it appears that people tend to sit at the bar when they come in alone and/or when they are open to socializing

with other tap room customers. The bar is the only place in this tap room where I observed any stranger-to-stranger interaction.

The bar fixture at the Green Bar (Site D) (see Figures 7 & 8) is the smallest of all four tap rooms and is unique in shape. It is similar to an L-shape but has an angled corner and seats about eight people. This provides visual access to others seated at the bar. Because of its small size, someone seated at one end could easily socially interact with someone seated at the other end. During my observation of this tap room, the bar seating was almost fully occupied by customers who I perceived to be regulars. They were all socially interacting with each other as well as the beer-tenders.

Amenities

None of the tap rooms observed serve food (aside from peanuts, chips, and meat sticks), however customers may bring food in at all locations. In addition to serving food, bars may provide any number of amenities such as games (like darts, pool tables, shuffleboard, video poker or trivia, or even board games), televisions, and free Wi-Fi. The question is: do amenities such as these encourage social interaction?

The Small Bar (Site A) has a very small television mounted on the wall (see Figure 13).

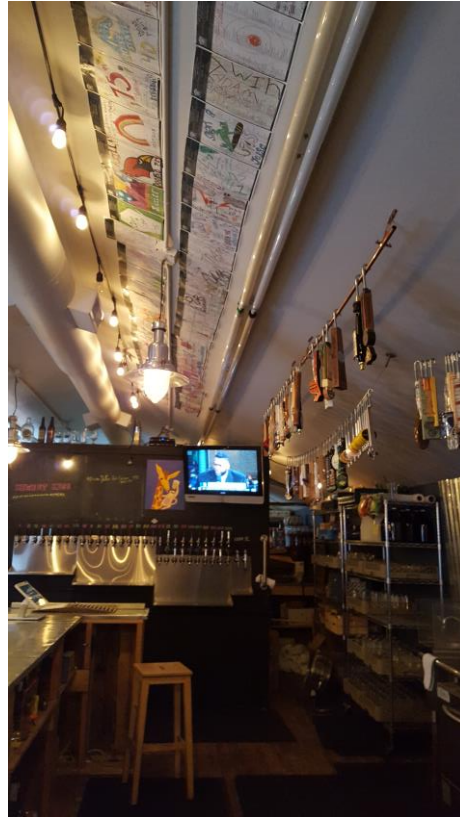


Figure 13. Television at the Small Bar (Site A). This figure illustrates the placement and size of the television.

It is not always turned on, and when it is, the sound is low or off. Usually when the television is on, it is tuned to sports. Only ten percent of survey respondents felt the television in this tap room make the environment a good place for social interaction. I have observed that when the television is on at this tap room, it is something customers may glance at, but they typically do not have their eyes peeled to it. The only other amenity identified at the Small Bar (Site A) is free internet access. The password is identified at the top of their menus. Only five percent of survey respondents identified the Wi-Fi access as a factor that makes this tap room a good environment for social interaction, while 40 percent were connected to the free Wi-Fi during their visit (see Figures 14 and 15 respectively). One interviewee said the fact that there are no amenities (referring to bar games and large televisions) makes this tap room a good social space. The lack of amenities helps keep conversation as the main activity at this tap room.

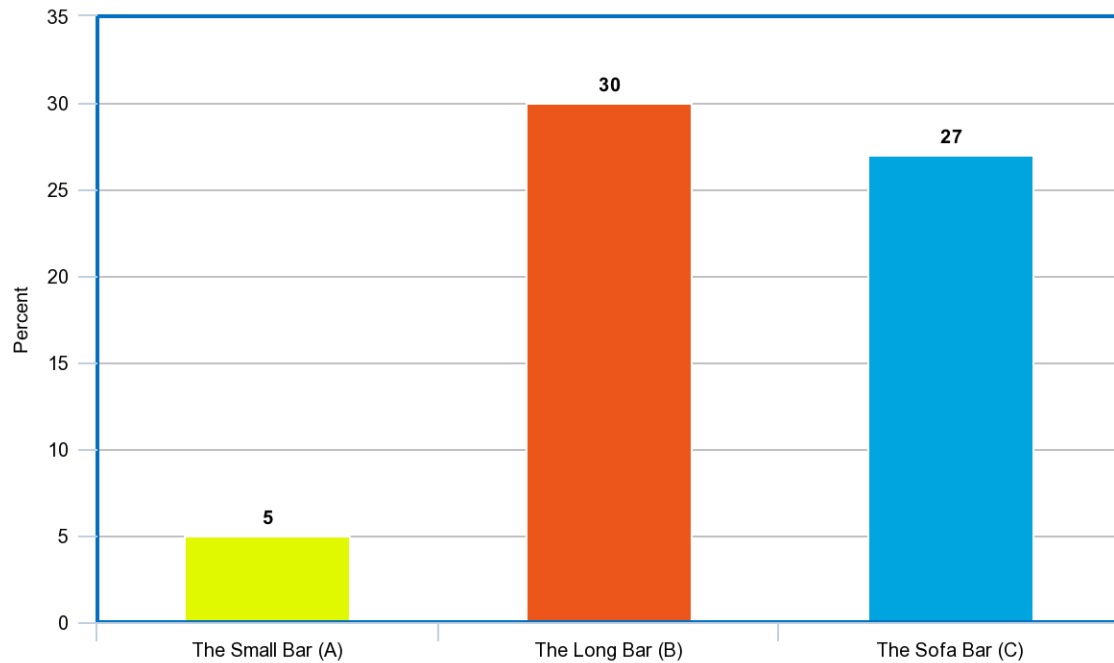


Figure 14. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the free Wi-Fi makes the tap room a good environment for social interaction.

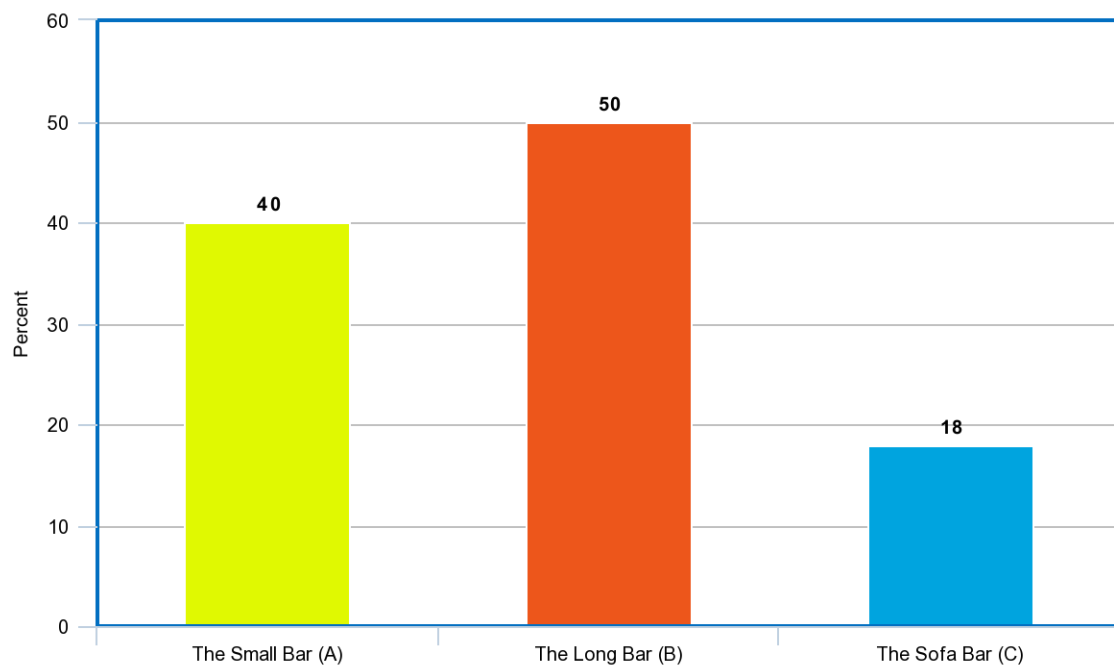


Figure 15. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who were connected to the free Wi-Fi during their visit.

The Long Bar (Site B) is similar in that it does have one television mounted behind the bar (a bit larger than the one at the Small Bar (Site A)), but it is not always on, and when it is, the sound is low or off (see Figure 16).



Figure 16. Television at the Long Bar (Site B). This figure illustrates the placement and size of the television.

It is mounted in a location where not every customer would have visual access to it. During one of my observations of this tap room, a regular came in with his dinner from home, and the beer-tender immediately asked him which game he wanted to watch and turned it on for him. Even so, this customer was more engaged in socially interacting with other bar visitors than he was with the television. The Long Bar (Site B) also has free Wi-Fi. The password is identified at the top of their menus. 50 percent of survey respondents indicated that they were connected to the tap room's Wi-Fi (see Figure 15). There are no games available at this tap room. I did see during one observation a group of young men come in with their own cribbage board.

The Sofa Bar (Site C) has three televisions mounted in various places throughout the tap room, the largest being behind the bar. The volumes are off so as to not interfere with the music playing. It is actually difficult to not pay attention to the television when seated at the bar on some level because it is so large. I did not however observe anyone fully watching it and saw no occasions in which the televisions lead to social interaction. Conversely, 82 percent of survey

respondents perceived the televisions as making this tap room a good environment for social interaction (see Figure 17).

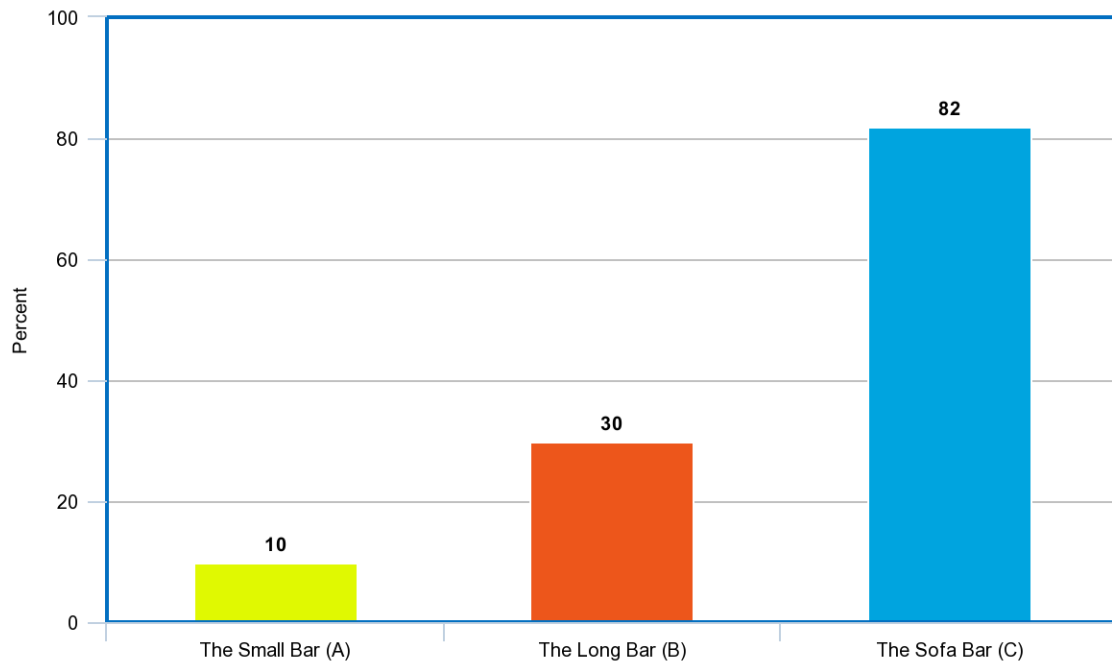


Figure 17. Survey Results. This figure illustrates the percentage of respondents who believe the television(s) make the tap room a good environment for social interaction.

The Sofa Bar (Site C) also offers free internet access, but the name of the network is such that you aren't sure it belongs to them and you need to ask for the password. I did not see the information posted anywhere. The Sofa Bar (Site C) has a small shuffleboard to one side of the tap room, which I always think is a fun and unique find. Other than me and people I was with, I only saw people playing it once during the three observations. I did not see that the shuffleboard encouraged social interaction. Perhaps if there were some seating options nearer the shuffleboard, other customers may become engaged with the players. This tap room also has a couple tabletop games available for use, such as Connect Four and Jenga. I saw customers playing Connect Four during one of the observations but did not see that it encouraged social interaction. While they may be fun to play, it appears that games may actually discourage social

interaction, perhaps because the players are too focused on their next move. One interviewee suggested that something like organized group trivia nights may make this tap room more socially interactive.

The Green Bar (Site D) has no televisions. They offer free unsecure Wi-Fi, no password needed. This tap room has a small shelf of cards and board games. I did not see anyone using them during the one observation. Because the options were not all two-person games (like those at the Sofa Bar (Site C)), perhaps they may encourage social interaction with other tap room customers, depending on where the players decided to set up the game. For example, I can imagine someone bringing a game over to the bar and getting others there to join in. Additional observations would be needed to determine if this is ever the case.

Lighting

The observations I have conducted suggest that tap rooms don't tend to offer as much in the way of what one might call "mood lighting" as do other types of bars. While it was difficult to determine whether the lighting in the four tap rooms observed directly affected social interaction, here is what I observed.

The Small Bar (Site A) gets very little natural light coming into the seating area unless the door to the outside patio is left open, which it tends to be on nice days. The artificial light provides a dim to medium level of light inside, and it is warm (rather than cool) light. There are three industrial style pendants hanging over the bar, and bare bulb string lights strung through the back area and outside. One interviewee felt the light level in this tap room help make it a good environment for social interaction, but she could not identify why.

The Long Bar (Site B) gets natural light coming in through the front windows which makes it feel clean and brighter than the Small Bar (Site A). Similar to the Small Bar, though,

are the industrial style pendant lights hanging over the bar and the string lights also strung throughout. Even when it is dark outside, the light level in this tap room is a bit brighter than The Small Bar. While I did not intend to talk about color yet, I do feel I need to say here that the light wall color also makes this environment appear brighter.

One of the interviewees felt that the Sofa Bar (Site C) is too dark. While there are windows on three of the walls, large outdoor overhangs do block much of the direct light. There are also very few light fixtures turned on in this tap room. Aside from a few wall sconces and a couple track lights, there is not much else in the way of artificial light. While I personally did not perceive this tap room to be too dark, as did the interviewee, I did recognize that the light felt cool rather than warm, making it feel a bit gloomy and gray, particularly on the overcast days that the Pacific Northwest tends to get a lot of during much of the year.

The Green Bar (Site D) is the most brightly lit of all four tap rooms. It definitely did not have that typical bar lighting feel. This tap room has windows all along the front with a shade to pull down when needed, as these windows face west so get direct sun in the evenings. The artificial light comes from recessed can fixtures. There are also a couple track spots directed toward signage. The brighter light may encourage social interaction among tap room visitors.

Music

Bitner (1992) suggested that the effects of music are more noticeable when it is extreme (e.g. loud), when a person spends considerable time in the establishment, and when it conflicts with expectation. A bar without music certainly conflicts with expectation. The Small Bar and the Long Bar (Sites A and B) do not play music, and I have heard numerous comments about it. People do notice and find themselves surprised to say they appreciate it. Both interviewees at both of these two tap rooms suggest that the fact they do not play music or have television

volume up make these tap rooms good environments for social interaction. One said, “If we put music in, people wouldn’t talk as much.”

At the Sofa Bar (Site C), 64 percent of the survey respondents indicated that the music played there makes for a good environment for social interaction. I found the music at the Sofa Bar was at a perfect level of volume. You can hear and enjoy it, but it is not so loud that you are kept from hearing a conversation or even other bar visitors who are not seated near you. Being that The Sofa Bar is of a larger square footage, I feel you are not at such risk of losing the personal, conversation-focused atmosphere of the smaller tap rooms.

The music played at the Green Bar (Site D) was louder than that of the Sofa Bar (Site C). It did not, however, seem to hinder social interaction. This tap room appeared very social although the music volume was getting close to being too loud, in my own opinion. You could still hear others, but if it were any louder, I think it would cross that line.

Noise/Acoustics

The only site worth mentioning in this section is the Long Bar (Site B). The other three tap rooms had fine acoustic properties, whereas the Long Bar has a high ceiling of perhaps about 12 feet. In this long, narrow space with all hard surfaces, sound reverberates and echoes, making busy nights extremely noisy. It is probably a good thing they do not play music for this reason if not the other. One interviewee made mention of this problem more than once during the interview, noting that this is one element that make this environment a poor social space.

Cosmetic Décor

The Small Bar (Site A) has the unpretentious, casual atmosphere that Oldenburg (1989) describes as an attribute of a good third place. The materials are natural and rough rather than refined and fancy. There are one-dollar bills mounted high up on one wall with customer

signatures and notes and paper menus hanging on the sloped ceiling signed or illustrated by customers who have completed “the 40.” “The 40” is 40 taster size glasses, one from each of the 40 taps of local beers and ciders. These elements give people something to look at and open up conversation. There are tap handles hanging from the ceiling and beer signs and stickers on the blue walls. It’s about the beer and the people more than it is about the décor which actually makes this environment perfect. During my research, I heard more than one person indicate this. They like that it is not fancy. It makes people feel comfortable here. People are more likely to socially interact with others when they feel comfortable.

One patron has said to me more than once in general conversation that the Long Bar (Site B) should paint their white walls the same blue color as the Small Bar (Site A) (same owners); that it feels too bright in the Long Bar. The Small Bar has a sort of slate blue wall color, while The Long Bar has cream colored walls. The light, bright feel in the Long Bar does make the place appear clean; however it also feels a bit stark and devoid of interest. There is not a whole lot going on in the way of décor at the Long Bar. One bit of décor that I have observed opening up the doors to conversation is their “Artist of the Month” wall. Just like it sounds, art is swapped out each month and offered for sale.

One can really see that the Sofa Bar (Site C) put some effort into their décor. The beers offered on tap are written on pieces of drift wood attached to the wall. They can be swapped out as the taps change. There is a dark turquoise accent paint color behind and shiplap behind the bar. The rest of the walls are a basic tan color. The sofas offer something to the ambience, and the window benches have large decorative pillows. With all that said, I did not see any correlation between these elements and social interaction. I could not identify anything in the way of their décor that would appear to start up conversation.

The Green Bar (Site D) has green walls which the interviewee did not like. This with the yellow colored floors gave off a sort of sickly tone to me. They did however have some decorative items that would likely start up conversation. There is interesting art hung in several places, such as an aerial map of the area, beer signs hung throughout, and tchotchkes on shelves.

The observations I conducted seem to have validated Oldenburg (1989) in that the low profile aspect, the plainness, for whatever reason lends itself to a good third place environment. I contend that the Small Bar and the Green Bar are the most low profile in appearance on the interior, and these two sites certainly seem to have a high number of regulars.

Regulars

Regulars provide a vibe that you are in a special place. To once again quote Oldenburg (1989):

The third place is just so much space unless the right people are there to make it come alive, and they are the regulars. It is the regulars who give the place its character and who assure that on any given visit some of the gang will be there...

It is the regulars whose mood and manner provide the infectious and contagious style of interaction and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial. (pp. 33-34)

I found through my own observations of these four tap rooms that regulars are pretty easily identified. You can see it in their comfort and interactions with others.

The Small Bar and the Green Bar (Sites A and D) were chock-full of regulars in all observations. Being an insider at one of these locations and a newbie at the other provided me with both perspectives and a recognition and respect for what Oldenburg says about regulars. I am a regular at The Small Bar and have often wondered what it would feel like to come into that tap room for the first time. I had a similar opportunity when I walked into The Green Bar. I

could just tell that all those seated around the bar were regulars. They seemed friendly and I felt like I wanted in! It felt like if I went to that tap room and sat at the bar just once or twice, I would become a part of their conversations and add to my stock pile of acquaintances. They made me feel comfortable enough to socially interact with them when I was there, and I did a little bit.

Interviews at the Small Bar (Site A) revealed that customers like the social nature of this tap room. When asked, “What elements of this bar make you return?” the following statements were made: “It’s a cool place to hang out with people. You talk to people. It’s social. You make new friends.” “It’s like a family here.” “It’s like Cheers.” One interviewee even stated, “This bar makes it more comfortable,” when asked about social interaction. The presence of regulars does indeed lead to social interaction.

Discussion

Survey results indicated that 95% of customers from all four tap rooms considered them to be social environments when asked to circle “yes” or “no.” Only one of all respondents (from The Sofa Bar (Site C)) answered “no.” Is it expectation or reality? In other words, regardless of the true social nature of a bar environment, do people still answer yes because of the association of bars with social interaction? Observations indicate that social interaction did indeed occur at all sites. The findings in this study reveal some answers to the research question, “How does the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bar environments?”

I found that an overall small size makes a person feel more important in the space and keeps all bar visitors within a conversational proximity to one another. My findings indicate that social interaction was not as prominent at The Sofa Bar which is the largest of the four tap rooms. It also has the lowest ceiling of the four tap rooms observed which is consistent with

Brand's suggestion that "a high (or sloping) ceiling encourages social interaction" (p. 2). While The Green Bar is the second largest of the four, it feels broken up into two smaller sections, the area in the back near the bar provided for social interaction, while the area up front allows a quieter atmosphere for those who wish to be alone or hold more intimate conversations. This leads to the question: do customers always come to a bar to socialize? A bar may reach a broader customer base if it provides opportunities for social choice. If one wants to be left alone or hold a private conversation, an area that feels more removed from the crowd may be desirable. This may be why The Sofa Bar had less interaction between customers.

In Waxman's (2006) study of coffee shops, she found that comfortable seating as well as seating that can easily be moved to accommodate conversations or groups contribute to a customer's inclination to linger. I did not find a correlation between seat comfort and a customer's inclination to linger; however, it does appear that the ability to move seating in order to accommodate conversation is important to the level of social interaction in a bar. I observed people moving seats at two of the four tap rooms, while it did not seem necessary at the other two.

Will's (2013) statement, "A bar facilitates engagement between staff and patrons in an area specific to recreational social interaction" (pp. 70-71), certainly proved true at each of the four tap rooms observed in my study. I observed bartenders actively engaging with customers at the bar at all locations, regardless of how busy it was. A small L-shaped or angled bar also keeps people close to other customers and visible to one another. The bar is like one big communal table. Seating options and arrangements which provide proximity and visual access to others are more likely to inspire stranger-to-stranger interactions and make these conversations feel more natural. This is consistent with Taffer's suggestion that, "When you're sitting at the

bar, you're not staring at the wall; you're staring at another person, so they're inherently more interactive and more comfortable [than bars where customers face the wall]" (Lazzaro, 2016, Ways to Arrange a Bar section, para. 1).

Amenities may be fun, but there was no indication that elements such as television, games, or Wi-Fi increase social interaction. A television may provide something to comment on; however this was not seen in the observations conducted. As one interviewee pointed out, a lack of amenities makes social engagement the only activity to participate in aside from enjoying a nice cold beer or cider. This statement was consistent with my observations. My observations are not consistent with Bowen's (2016) quote from a bartender calling TVs "conversation killers" (second image caption). While I understand the point, I simply did not observe this. Rather, I found that people who were engaged in conversation tended to ignore the televisions altogether.

As Bitner (1992) noted, cosmetic décor (signs, symbols, and artifacts) is a part of the perceived servicescape, "influencing people's beliefs about a place and their beliefs about the people and products found in that place" (p. 62). My findings suggest casual cosmetic décor may make people feel more comfortable in a place due to its lack of formality. The more casual the environments, the less likely people are to feel a need to be formal, allowing them to be more comfortable to approach and have informal interactions with others. Décor such as beer signs and brewery posters remind customers that they all have something in common, regardless of social or economic standing, background, age, race, etc. An affinity for good beer.

Ambient properties are also important. Bitner's (1992) suggestion that undesirable noise in a servicescape environment may cause physical discomfort and avoidance behavior is consistent with my findings at The Long Bar where the busier it was, the less people socially

interacted with others (outside their own party). A lack of loud music and other background noise helps foster social interaction, as bar guests can hear one another and respond without raising their voices. Poor acoustic properties hinder social interaction as it makes it difficult to hear others.

Regulars can be of great importance to the success of a bar and provide a certain energy as was indicated by Oldenburg (1989). Getting customers to return may be more likely if these physical and ambient conditions are carefully considered by designers and bar owners, leading customers to have a positive social experience in the establishment. Returning customers lead to regulars.

Limitation

Additional research sites may allow for more comparisons from which to draw further conclusions. Conducting experiments within a single site may also provide additional insights, such as differences between having music playing or not, turning the television on or off, adding or taking away an amenity, changing the light levels or décor, etc. Because our perceptions of space are holistic, this would allow the researcher to isolate a single element and perhaps better determine its effect on social interaction. The utilization of lumen test equipment may help to better define light levels.

In addition to the observations, I found the surveys extremely helpful in determining what customers experience and find value in at the tap rooms. Future research will include more surveys in order to even out the numbers collected at each site. Being a novice interviewer, I believe I could work on improving follow-up questions and encouraging the interviewees to elaborate more on their answers. I would also develop interview questions for bar owners and employees in order to gain different perspectives of the same environments.

Conclusion

From this research, some of the perceived effects of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction in bar environments include the effects of physical elements, such as overall space dimensions, layout of space, bar size and shape, and seating arrangement; as well as ambient elements, such as music and acoustic properties.

Stranger-to-stranger interactions are of the greatest interest, as there must be some level of comfort before addressing a stranger simply to socialize or butting into another's conversation. Being an interior designer and having completed this research, I believe the built environment is a strong influencer of this level of comfort. Mainly through observation, I am left with a strong notion that the crucial physical factors influencing the level of social interaction in bars are the perceived size of space, layout, bar size and shape, seating arrangement, and proximity. I did not sense that lighting in these tap rooms made much difference. Sound (whether it be music, television noise, or acoustic properties) also seems to play some part in the level of social interaction, however I found it more difficult to ascertain their role.

Oldenburg (1989) was correct when he said, "It is the regulars whose mood and manner provide the infectious and contagious style of interaction and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial" (p. 34). At each of the sites I studied, I know that I personally felt so much more comfortable piping into conversation around the regulars. I felt that if others feel this is a good place away from home, then it must be, which somehow made me feel more comfortable myself.

How does the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bars? In order of importance, I found the following design elements or practices encourage social interaction in tap room establishments:

1. *A smaller perceived size and dimension of space* (overall space or smaller areas with a perceived separation).
2. *A smaller bar fixture in the shape of an “L” or similar* that keeps customers within speaking distance and provides visual access to more of them.
3. *Layout and seating options providing visual access and proximity to others nearby.* We are more likely to hold a conversation with someone we can look in the eye, and we must be within hearing distance of one another. *Communal tables* act like an extension of the bar. They bring people together like the bar does, letting people know it’s okay to approach. *Flexible seating options* allow customers to manipulate the space as needed and group up with others. The ability to make the space their own also lends to a feeling of being at home.
4. *A good bartender* will encourage and facilitate social interaction and help to develop a healthy regular base of customers. We may consider a bartender a physical and ambient characteristic of a bar environment!
5. *The presence of regulars* provides a vibe right off the bat letting other customers know it is okay to get comfortable and socialize with others. It also leads to a desire to break into that crowd. You know you’re *in* when you are socializing with the regulars!
6. *No music or noise from television* encourages social interaction. Customers can hear one another and feel a need to fill silence. What else can you do?
7. *Casual cosmetic décor* that feels comfortable and provides reminders of what all customers have in common. It should reflect the local community. A refined or glitzy environment isn’t going to go over well in a casual blue-collar community.

Findings indicate that the following design elements and practices discourage social interaction:

1. *Poor acoustic properties* leading to sound reverberation. It becomes too difficult to hear others and hold a conversation. What's the point? It's too much work.
2. *A low light level* may perceptively remove people from other customers. If I can't see you, why engage you in conversation?

While my research focused on how the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bars, one must recognize that there are additional factors that may be influencers such as service. The tap rooms I observed do not serve food. Does this make people more likely to socially interact with other customers? What is the impact of the service staff on social interaction? Questions such as this open the door for further research. The importance of social interaction to our health and wellbeing adds value to this research (Umberson and Montez, 2010). In addition, bar owners may also see increased profit from a design that is well developed with the intent of maximizing social interaction, and ultimately contribute to the economy at large. The findings from this environment-behavior research study contribute to knowledge within the design industry and social sciences by offering additional data to draw from and further explore related to effects of the built environment on social interaction. According to Rosenbaum (2006), "If consumers maintain social relationships in a commercial establishment, the meanings they instill in the place may transform it from a place of consumption to a place of significance, namely, a home" (p. 61). Who knows what else the results of this study may lead to? According to Sismondo, "Chatting over a beer has often led to dramatic change" (Dalzell, 2011). Be the change. Cheers!

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Appendix A

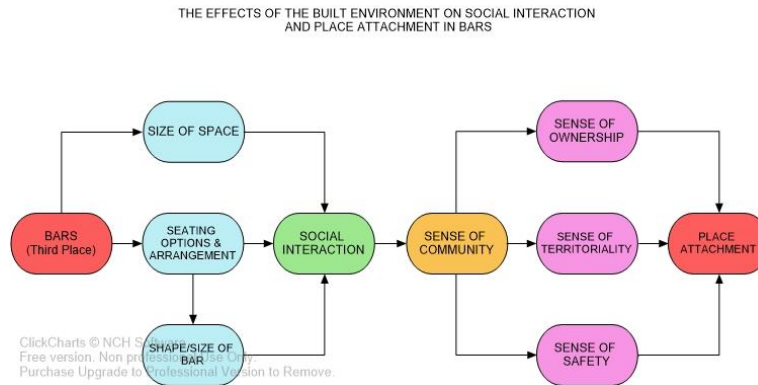
CITI Certificate

		Completion Date 09-Sep-2018 Expiration Date 08-Sep-2021 Record ID 28578531
This is to certify that:		
Julie Watts		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group) Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Course Learner Group) 1 - Basic Course (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
Ball State University		
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative		
Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w3965fb47-a009-4510-a1e2-2c1ee705fa69-28578531		

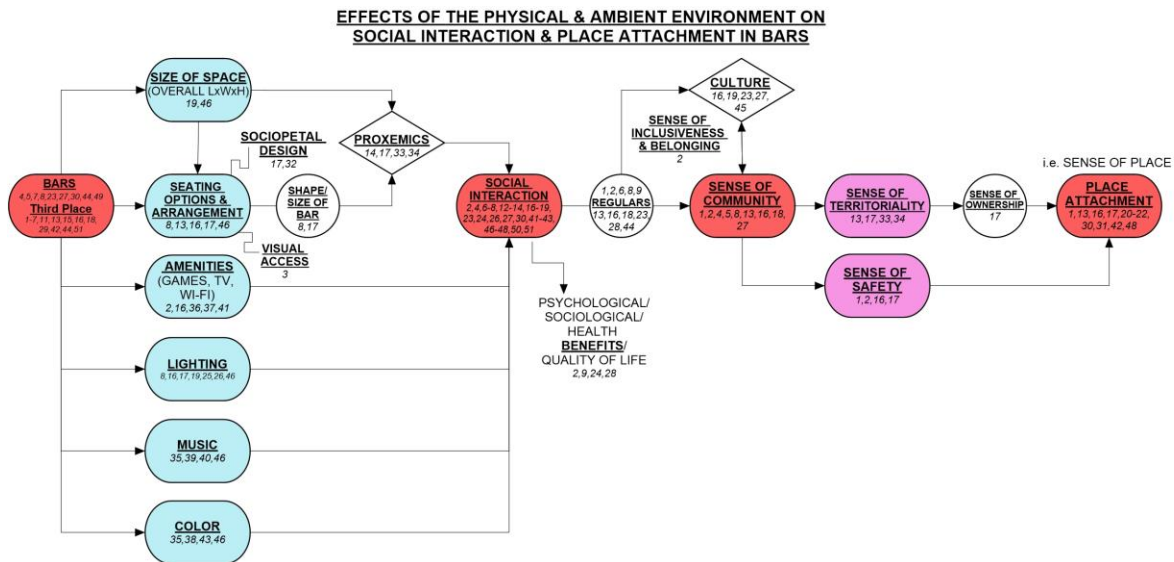
Appendix B

Initial Literature Review/Concept Map

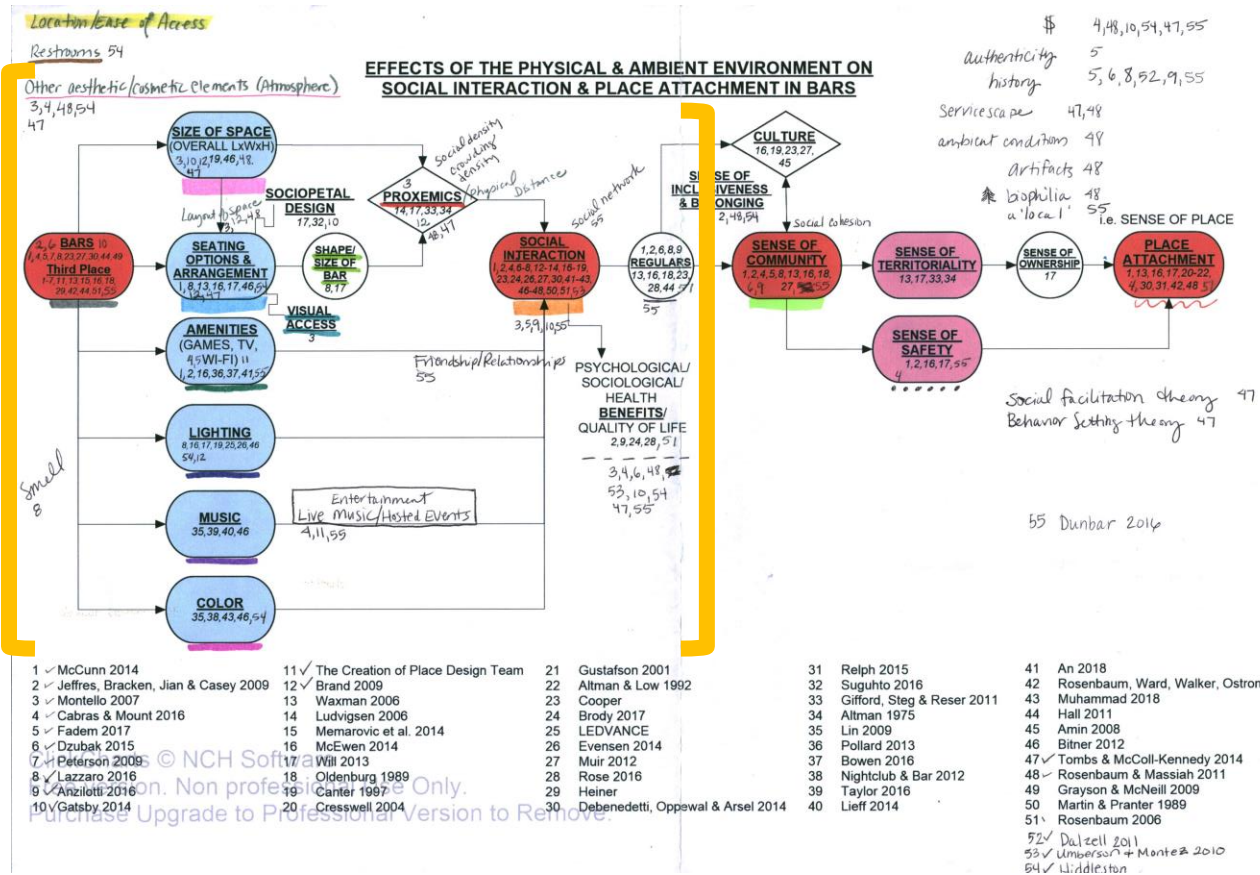
Started with:



Added detail:



Ended with:



Appendix C

Observation Procedure Form

Researcher Name: Julie Watts

Research question: How does the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bars?

Background:

- *Sites A & B* each have 40 Washington State beers and ciders on tap, and sell many more by the can, bottle, or case. No food is served, but outside food can be brought in. Hours are:

Sundays 11 AM – 9 PM

Mon & Tue 12 PM – 9 PM

Wed & Thu 12 PM – 10 PM

Fri 12 PM – 11 PM

Sat 11 AM – 11PM

They'll stay open later if people are there.
--

This is a small business (not a franchise). Site A opened over three years ago; Site B about one year ago.

- *Site C* was founded in 2015. The taproom has only their own brews on tap. Their hours are:

Monday - Wednesday 2PM - 9PM

Thursday - Sunday 11:30AM – 9PM

They have a second location in a neighboring city.

- *Site D* has ten rotating taps from different craft breweries. Hours are:

Tues - SAT: 11:00 AM–11:00 PM

Sun & Mon: 11:00 AM–10:00 PM

Data Collection Method: Observation/Behavioral Mapping

Participants: Tap room (patrons, employees, owner) **Why?** I have chosen this bar because of its convenient location to me. I am already aware of the fact that this bar has a large base of “regulars” and a unique social atmosphere where strangers tend to meet strangers.

Sample Size: I will observe this one location at least three different days of the week at three different times (mid-day, afternoon, evening).

Ethical Issues: As a non-participant observer, I do not believe there are any ethical issues. Bar visitors/employees will not be named or in any other way identifiable in my notes.

Data Collection Protocol: During my non-participating observations, I shall sit in any location that seems the most unobtrusive at the bar. I anticipate spending approximately 45 minutes to one hour as a non-participant. If I choose to become a participant after this time, I will simply do what I would normally do at a bar and make any notes immediately after.

Documentation: I will make a floor plan sketch including a seating chart to indicate where patrons sit, if and where they move, if and who they converse with, and if they appear to know one another or are strangers. I will also note times of arrival and departure and indicate whether they are male or female. I will either measure or guesstimate (if measuring seems at all intrusive) the overall room size and bar shape/size and approximate the distance between seats. I will also make specific notes regarding the comfort of seats, lighting conditions, color, amenities (games, TV, Wi-Fi, other), the presence of music, and indications of visual access. I will also complete field summary notes providing my overall impressions and any unique observations during each visit. I will note day and time of each observation.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Name of establishment: _____

Location: _____

Ease of access: _____

Seat comfort: _____

Amenities: ☐ Television Number: _____ Size: _____

☐ Wi-Fi

☐ Bar Games What: _____

☐ Programmed Entertainment: _____

☐ Other _____

Lighting: Daylighting _____

Artificial ☐ Dim ☐ Medium ☐ Bright

Music: ☐ Yes Type: _____ Volume: _____

Color(s): _____

Temperature: ☐ Warm ☐ Cold ☐ Average _____

Other physical/ambient observations: _____

Overall dimensions: W _____ L _____ H _____

Sketch:

Notes:

Appendix D

Letter of Consent

Study Title

Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction Bar Environments

Study Purpose and Rational

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how the physical and ambient environment (such as square footage, bar and seating layout and design, amenities, such as television, Wi-Fi, games, etc., and sounds, such as music, etc.) of a bar establishment may affect social interaction among patrons. The results of this study may contribute valuable information to industries such as interior design and architecture, hospitality, environmental psychology, and the social sciences. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Any bar patrons, employees, managers, and owners may be included in this study; therefore, the age group of participants is 21 and over.

Participation Procedures and Duration

If you agree to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct an interview with you at the research location (bar). The interview will include questions related to your choice to frequent this bar establishment, how often you visit and why, thoughts on your experiences here, how you use the space, your interaction with others, etc. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes depending on the length of your answers.

Audio Recording

With your permission only, the interview may be audio recorded. If so, the audio file will be deleted after it has been transcribed, within two weeks of the recording date. Audio recordings will only be used to aid the researcher in collecting answers to interview questions and will not at any point be used for presentations or publications.

Data Confidentiality

All data will be maintained as confidential, and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data. The records of this study will be kept private. Any sort of report made public will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

Storage of Data and Data Retention Period

Only the researcher will have access to collected data. Research records will be kept in a locked file cabinet and/or a password secure computer/storage media. Raw data will only be kept until transcribed (up to two weeks) at which point it will be destroyed. Final data will be kept only as long as needed (up to one year) at which point it will be destroyed.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no perceived risks for participating in this study.

Benefits

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5052 or at orihelp@bsu.edu.

Study Title

Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction Bar Environments

Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in this research project entitled, "Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction in Bar Environments." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:

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Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Date	
Time	
Place	
Interviewer	
Interviewee (s)	

Research Question: How does the physical and ambient environment affect social interaction in bar environments?

Data Collection Method: Individual and/or group in-person interview will be held on site. Choice of individual or group interview will be the choice of the interviewee.

This method was chosen to capture interviewees' responses within the natural environment.

Participants: Bar patrons (age 21+)

Sample Size: I will interview one to three bar patrons at each research site.

Ethical Issues: I will first obtain permission to interview and to record the conversation. I will not interview or record anyone who does not consent. Interviewer will provide a Consent Form for review and signature. I will be sure to get permission to use interview content and quote accurately if permission is granted.

Data Collection Protocol: I will approach potential interviewees in person to introduce myself, if necessary, and share information about my research. The interview will take place at that time or at a future time convenient to both the interviewer and interviewee. The interview will last approximately 15 minutes depending on the length of the answers and follow-up questions. I will use an open-ended interview guide to allow participants the greatest opportunity in giving their responses. I will steer clear from double-barreled questions that ask two issues in one question and can cause confusion, and will stay away from complex questions that are often long questions and may prevent the subject from hearing the entire question before they think or

speaking the response. Interviewer will take notes and may decide (with interviewee's consent) to audio record for later transcription.

Guiding Questions:

1. Is this the first time you have been to this bar, or have you been here before?
 - a. If first visit:
 - a. What elements of this bar would make you return?
 - b. What elements of this bar would make you NOT return?
 - b. If you've been here before:
 - a. What about this bar made you return?
 - b. How often do you visit?
 - c. Would you call yourself a "regular"?
 - d. What day(s) of the week do you typically visit?
 - e. What time of day do you typically visit?
 - f. How long do you typically stay?
 - g. Where do you typically sit when you come here? Why? What makes that space appealing to you?
 - h. How long have you been frequenting this bar?
2. For what purpose did you come to this bar? (Ex. socialize, be alone, drink, work, meet new people, etc.)
 - a. What elements of this bar make it a good place for this?
3. Why do/did you choose to come to this bar rather than another bar?
4. Do you typically/did you arrive alone, with someone, or to meet up with a friend?
 - a. If you come/came with other(s), who do you come with (co-workers, employees, family, etc.)?
5. Are you comfortable socializing with other bar visitors here?

- a. What about this environment makes you comfortable/uncomfortable socializing with others?
6. Do/did you socially interact with other bar visitors?
 - a. If yes, were they sitting near you? Where?
 - b. How did the conversation ensue?
 - c. How long did the conversation last?
7. Have you made new acquaintances/friends at this bar? How many?
8. What are some of the things you like best about this bar?
9. What features of the building/interior space do you like best?
10. What elements of this bar make it a good social space?
11. What features of the building/interior space do you like least?
12. What elements of this bar make it a poor social space?
13. Do you have any suggestions to improve the bar to make it a more social atmosphere?
14. Is there anyone else you would recommend I interview?

Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your willingness to help with my research. Should you think of anything else you would like to share related to my research topic, you may email me at jwatts4@bsu.edu.

Appendix F

Anonymous Survey

Research Title: *Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction in Bar Environments*

Study Purpose and Rational You are being asked to take part in a research study of how the physical and ambient environment (such as square footage, bar and seating layout and design, amenities, such as television, Wi-Fi, games, etc., and sounds, such as music, etc.) of a bar establishment may affect social interaction among patrons. The results of this study may contribute valuable information to industries such as interior design and architecture, hospitality management, environmental psychology, and the social sciences.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Any bar patrons, employees, managers, and owners may be included in this study; therefore, the age group of participants is 21 and over.

Participation Procedures and Duration

If you agree to participate in this study, you will answer provided survey questions related to your visit and social experiences at this bar. The survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Data Anonymity All data will be maintained as anonymous, and no identifying information, such as names, should be provided. Even so, the records of this study will be kept private. Any sort of report made public will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants.

Storage of Data and Data Retention Period

Only the researcher will have access to collected data. Research records will be kept in a locked file cabinet and/or a password secure computer/storage media. Data collected in online surveys is accessible only by the researcher by logging in with a unique user name and password. Data will be kept only as long as needed (up to one year) at which point it will be destroyed.

Risks or Discomforts

There are no perceived risks for participating in this study.

Benefits

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you are free to choose not to participate at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. You are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Alternative Survey Method Rather than completing this paper survey you may ask the researcher for a link to complete the survey online.

IRB Contact Information

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5052 or at orihelp@bsu.edu.

Study Title

Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction Bar Environments

Consent

Your completion of this survey implies that you have read the description of this project, meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation, and agree and consent to participate in this research project entitled, *Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction in Bar Environments*.

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:

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Faculty Supervisor:

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Please, answer the following questions:

- 1) Day of the week (Mon., Tues., ...) _____ Time: _____ -

- 2) Would you consider this tap room to be a social environment? YES NO
- 3) Did you socially interact with anyone during your visit today? This may include anything from a short exchange of words to a lengthy conversation. YES NO
- 4) If you answered "yes" to question 2, who did you socially interact with? (Circle all that apply.)

- a) An employee/manager/owner (other than to place my order).
 - b) Someone I arrived with or intentionally met here.
 - c) One or more other tap room customer(s) whom I have met before. (Did not arrive with or plan to meet here today.)
 - d) One or more other tap room customer(s) whom I have *not* met before. (Did not arrive with or plan to meet here today.)
- 5) Please identify the following on the seating chart below:
- a) Mark with an “**X**” where you sat today.
 - b) Mark with an “**F**” where anyone you arrived with or intentionally met here sat today.
 - c) Mark with an “**A**” where anyone you socially interacted with and have met here before sat.
 - d) Mark with an “**S**” where anyone else you socially interacted with sat.

Seating Chart Here

- 6) Was there music playing during your visit today? YES NO
- 7) Was there a television on during your visit today? YES NO
- 8) Did you use the tap room's free Wi-Fi during your visit? YES NO
- 9) Did you play shuffle board during your visit today? YES NO
- 10) Was there a planned event during your visit today? YES NO
- ☐ Takeover/brewer's night ☐ Live music
- ☐ Trivia (or other interactive event) ☐ Other _____
- 10) What aspects about *this* bar make it a *good* environment for social interaction? (check all that apply)
- ☐ Overall size of the place
- ☐ Size and/or shape of bar
- ☐ Arrangement of elements within the space (space plan)
- ☐ Noise (such as music)
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Games (shuffle board, darts, billiards)
- ☐ Other amenities (Wi-Fi)
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Décor/color
- ☐ Service provided by employee(s)/owner/manager
- ☐ Other _____
- 11) What aspects about *this* bar make it a *poor* environment for social interaction? (check all that apply)
- ☐ Overall size of the place
- ☐ Size and/or shape of bar
- ☐ Arrangement of elements within the space (space plan)
- ☐ Noise (such as music)
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Games (shuffle board, darts, billiards)
- ☐ Other amenities (Wi-Fi)
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Décor/color
- ☐ Service provided by employee(s)/owner/manager
- ☐ Other _____

Thank you for your participation in this survey. The survey may be handed directly to the researcher upon completion.

Observation Mapping Example

